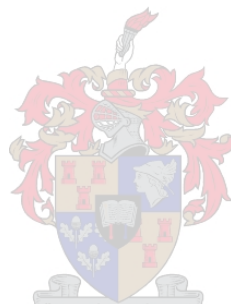


AT RISK YOUTH: THE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT BOYS WITH ABSENT FATHERS

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Educational Psychology (MEdPsych) at the Department of Educational
Psychology at Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The single-parent, female-headed household is a global phenomenon. In a patriarchal society such as South Africa, the absence of a father figure in the family place mothers in the unenviable position of having to play a double role, namely that of mother as well as the head of the family. The role of absent fathers in the at-riskness of adolescent boys is under researched in South Africa. The aim of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of ten adolescent boys who are growing up in father absent homes. The participants were from a low socio-economic area of the Western Cape, and high school pupils who were purposively selected from Grades 8, 9 and 10. A qualitative research methodology was used and data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and the construction of collages.

The findings showed that adolescent boys face many challenges in their development when they grow up without a strong male role model. These ten adolescents seemed to struggle with discipline issues at school as well as at home. They are at a vulnerable age, and at risk of making decisions that would be devastating to their futures.

OPSOMMING

Die enkelouer, vrou-as-hoof huishouding is 'n globale fenomeen. In 'n patriargale samelewing soos Suid-Afrika plaas die afwesigheid van 'n vader in die gesin ma's in 'n situasie waar hulle dubbele rolle moet vertolk, naamlik as ma sowel as hoof van die gesin. Die rol van die afwesige pa in die bevordering van riskantheid by adolessente seuns is nog nie voldoende nagevors nie. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die persepsies en ervarings van tien adolessente seuns uit huise met afwesige vaders in te verken en te beskryf. Die deelnemers was uit 'n lae sosio-ekonomiese area van die Wes-Kaap en doelgerig uit Grade 8, 9 en 10 geselekteer. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodologie is gebruik en data is deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, 'n fokusgroepgesprek en die konstruksie van 'n kollage ingesamel.

Die bevindinge toon dat adolessente seuns baie uitdaging ervaar tydens hul ontwikkelingsfase wanneer hulle opgroei sonder 'n sterk manlike rolmodel. Die tien adolessente sukkel met dissipline by die skool sowel as tuis. Hulle is 'n brose ouderdom en loop die gevaar om besluite te neem wat hulle toekoms kan vernietig.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The traditional nuclear family that consists of two parents and their children is increasingly being replaced by single-parent households, most of which are female-headed. (Popenoe, 1996; Vaden-Kierman et al., 1995; Wright, 1994). According to studies conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (1999), men are more likely than ever to live separately from their children and to father outside of marriage. Recent research on the family estimated that 40% of South Africa's 18 million children are being raised by single mothers (Prince, 2009). However, the disintegration of the nuclear family and an increase in the number of female-headed families is a continuing trend globally as well as locally. The structure of the family unit can impact negatively on the social wellbeing of children and especially boys. This study is interested in understanding what the experiences are of adolescent boys who are growing up in homes where a father is not part of the family structure.

Adolescent boys who grow up in families where there is no father could become boys considered to be at risk. A number of studies have found that youth growing up in fatherless households are more likely to be at risk of experiencing social problems (Popenoe, 1996; Wright, 1994) than other boys who do not share that background. In 1964 Wynn noted that the loss of a father increases the risk that a child, and

particularly a boy, is twice more likely to become a delinquent than a child with a father. This finding is supported by recent research that found that young boys who grew up without a father figure tend to show more anti-social behaviour than their counterparts who had father figures (Eitle, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Daniels & Adams, 2009). So, too, research conducted by Bronfenbrenner (1970) found that in father-absent families' boys tend to be more passive and dependent and that they readily transfer their attachment to gangs. These studies have found that once these vulnerable boys join a gang they have to earn the respect of gang members in order to keep their place, and they have to demonstrate their toughness and aggressiveness. This kind of behaviour and actions will clash with what is valued and accepted within mainstream society. For boys growing up in certain areas of the Western Cape, gangsterism is a defining feature of their social context. (Kinnes, 1995; Luyt & Foster, 2001; Morrell, 2002; Salo, 2003).

Young boys grow up to be adults who become fathers and community members. Sufficient research has not been done in the Western Cape province of South Africa on the challenges that adolescent boys face when growing up without a father figure in their lives. The importance of this study lies in the contribution it could make in advancing an in-depth understanding of the perceptions that boys have while growing up without fathers in their adolescent years. A better understanding of this problem could benefit the work that educational psychologists and counsellors do with youth at risk. The study will be delimited to adolescent boys growing up in fatherless families in the Western Cape, South Africa.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

As a global societal issue, youth at risk has received extensive attention with numerous studies carried out on the problem over the last decade (Wright , 1994; Vaden-Kierman et al., 1995; Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1996; Popenoe, 1996; Siegel & Senna, 1997; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Kowaleski & Dunifon, 2006; Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007). Some of these studies have focused on the changing family structure, with increasing emphasis being placed on the role of the absent father in the causation of at-risk behaviour. The disintegration of the family unit and the proliferation of single-headed households appear to be global problems. The United Nations has reported that there has been a shift from extended to nuclear families, as well as a rise in one-person households in the last fifty years (Eastwood, 2001). Urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation, which each brought a shift in traditional customs and ideas, along with housing shortages, HIV/AIDS and unemployment, are all problems affecting many aspects of the new South Africa. All these have played a role in the demise of the nuclear family and the rise of single-headed households.

The disintegration of the family unit in South Africa has a political past and can be traced back to policies implemented by the apartheid government. The Group Areas Act (1950), which often moved communities to outlying areas, necessitated husbands and fathers to travel long distances to urban areas to find employment.

This migrant labour system resulted in fathers being absent from their families for long periods.

At the same time, there are also more immediate reasons for the demise of the nuclear family. These include illegitimacy, teenage pregnancies, imprisonment of the father, substance abuse and dysfunctional families in the context of the community. Most of these causes that perpetuate this disintegration not only lead to single-headed households, but more specifically to single-headed households where the father is absent. Although the issue of the absent father cannot be held solely responsible for the rising rates of at-risk youth, it does seem to be a major contributor. In their studies on family life and youth at risk, Wright (1994), found that single-parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more youth at risk than two-parent families.

According to research by Katz (1999), the secure attachment or emotional investment process that a father figure provides facilitates the child's ability to develop and demonstrate both empathy and self-control. Furthermore, according to Katz (1999), an insecure attachment could lead to lower levels of empathy and self-control, and an increase in violent behaviour. This is in line with Popenoe's (1999) findings that youth at risk and involvement in crime rank high among the many detrimental effects which father absence has on youth. This research aims to understand the correlation between at-risk behaviour and father absence in adolescents by studying the personal perceptions of boys with no male role model in the family structure.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that was investigated in the study was the experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father. The study was undertaken in a Cape flats community in the Western Cape.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To determine what at-risk adolescent boys' experiences are of growing up without a father
- To harness their perceptions of the roles of the father in the family
- To determine the challenges they face growing up without a father
- To determine how their family accommodate the father's absence.

1.4 MOTIVATION TO DO THIS STUDY

During my first year of study toward the master's degree I was required to do community service. I was assigned to a school where my work entailed counselling adolescent boys. During these sessions I found that most of the student population that I counselled consisted of adolescent boys who were growing up without father figures. It seemed that many problems these adolescent boys had stemmed from this absence and this led to my research decision. This decision was supported by the school guidance counsellor who saw such a study as broadening existing understanding of such boys. Permission to conduct research at this particular school

was obtained from the school principal and the Western Cape Department of Education (Appendix A).

Prior to starting this formal study I conducted an informal survey of the school population to determine how many boys at the school were growing up without a father figure. The results showed that 50% of boys at this school grew up in female-headed households and without fathers in their lives. The table below reflects the results of this survey.

TABLE 1.1: NUMBER OF BOYS WITHOUT FATHERS		
Grade	Number of boys per class	Number of boys in female-headed households.
8	122	63 = 52%
9	160	79 = 49%
10	150	80 = 53%
Total	432	219 = 50%

I limited this study to Grades 8, 9 and 10 as research shows that boys in these grades seem to demonstrate a far greater incidence of antisocial behaviour and behavioural problems (WCED, 2007). This will also be expanded upon in the

literature review in Chapter 2. By obtaining a better understanding of the experiences of these boys, one can give insight into the type of problems they face and the intervention strategies to employ when counselling them.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

For this study a qualitative research methodology was selected. According to Mouton (2001), a qualitative approach has the potential to supplement and reorientate our current understanding of a situation. According to Patton (1987), qualitative research is not a set recipe, but involves learning through doing. Merriam (2002) states that it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words, that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings. An explorative research methodology was also used to enable the researcher to understand the life experiences of young boys growing up without a father figure. The main characteristic of explorative research is its focus on the goals of the research. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:39) describe it as making use of preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research. The researchers employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research as they attempt to look for new insights into phenomena. Such an approach falls within the social constructivist philosophy which argues that multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals (Merriam, 1998). A basic interpretive study begins with an interest in learning how individuals experience and interact within their social world and the meaning they assign to it (Merriam; 2002).

This explorative study relied on semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the construction of a collage for its data collection. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow for greater flexibility in pursuing new information as it emerges. Questions around several themes served as guidelines for the interviews. As it was explorative in nature it was anticipated that the research would yield new insights into the phenomenon of fatherless households and at-risk youth (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

According to Basch (1987), the focus group is a qualitative approach to learning about population subgroups with respect to conscious, semi-conscious and unconscious psychological and sociological characteristics and processes. According to Krueger (1988), a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. After the focus group interviews, a collage was compiled. The decision to use this as a method of data collection is supported by the view that young people often find visuals a more user-friendly means to communicate their innermost views that they find difficult to express verbally (Daniels, 2006). Art is a means of creative self-expression that can cross the boundaries of race, culture, class, geographical setting and age. Furthermore, it has been found to be a universal language of self-expression for children.

For this study, a group of ten boys, in the early adolescent developmental phase, were selected purposively. They all attended the same Senior Secondary School in the Western Cape and grew up without fathers. Merriam (2000) states that in qualitative research samples are selected purposively according to specified criteria in order to gain information about the phenomenon under investigation. This study could be described as an exploratory and descriptive journey concerned with the collection of rich, textual data. The process started out with an extensive review of literature related to the field of study. As Merriam points out, qualitative research does not follow a linear process. Data analysis will therefore be a simultaneous ongoing process (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998). Data analysis will be done through the following processes: reflection on the part of the researcher during and after data collection as well as content analysis of the data collected through the interviews, observation, focus groups, collages and review of the literature.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Careful attention was given to ethical guidelines that are part of research. Ethical guidelines help us evaluate the moral “rights and wrongs” of particular strategies of doing and reporting research (Naumann, 1998). Firstly the necessary forms were completed and a copy of this research proposal was forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department for their approval. Consent was obtained from the participants, parents/guardians and the school. All parties were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants

were given clear and honest explanations of what was expected of them. This allowed them to decide whether or not to participate. Strict anonymity and confidentiality were maintained regarding information gathered from the study. Participants were made aware that they would have full access to the transcripts and final report on request, before publication.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Absent fathers

This term is used in the study to refer to the biological father's absence in the child's life. The father is physically absent from the home, does not provide for the individual, nor serve as a male role model.

1.7.2 Adolescent

In this study adolescent refers to a teenager experiencing the transition from childhood to adulthood. "A period in the human life cycle situated between childhood and adulthood" (Gouws, Kruger, Burger & Snyman, 2008).

1.7.3 Youth at Risk

Sameroff and Seifer (1983:1254) define it as follows: "Youth at risk is one who is at greater than average risk for later deviances in behaviour because of membership in some identifiable population. It can also be seen as the youth's potential of being at risk. The literature assessed talked

1.8 OVERVIEW OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study. It states what the research focus for the study is, and what the motivation was for selecting this problem. I then introduced the problem statement and the objectives of the study. Chapter 1 introduces the research design and addresses ethical issues that guided decision about access and the research population. Chapter 2 presents the literature review of current knowledge pertaining to the research problem. The literature review will form the frame of reference throughout the study whilst data is collected, processed and interpreted. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the decisions I made about the research design for the study. It provides an in-depth account of the qualitative approach used, the methods for data collection and analysis. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations and how the issues of reliability and validity were dealt with. Chapter 4 presents the data. It covers interpretation, discussion and analysis of data collected during the study. In Chapter 5 the conclusions of the study and recommendations for further research and practice or policy related to youth at risk are presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review forms an important part of the research process. Merriam (1998:49) defines the literature review in this context as “theoretical or conceptual writing in an area and the data based on research and observation”. The purpose of the literature review is to provide the researcher with an overall framework for where this piece of work fits into the bigger picture of previous research on the topic. As such, the literature review provides the foundation on which contributions to the knowledge base can be made. This theoretical framework informs the researcher on the population for the study, the criteria for sample selection as well as the refining of the research problem. The literature will remain the frame of reference throughout the study whilst data are collected, processed and interpreted.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Research on coloured boys from South Africa who grow up without fathers cannot be conducted without an understanding of how the laws of the country impacted on the family unit. As such, this chapter will start with the contextualization of the problem. In South Africa there were unique situations which impacted on the family

unit, for example the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the migrant labour system (Murray & O'Regan, 1990). These complex pieces of legislation had a tremendous social impact on the lives of the races that were affected by them.

Field (2001) argues that lack of employment opportunities, in and around rural settlements especially, compelled the most economically productive sector of the population to resort to oscillating migration (Migrant Labour System). This in turn hampered the development of the rural area by depriving it of its economically active men folk while the rural area remained densely populated with women, children, the aged and the infirm to take care of domestic activities. Oscillating migration benefited the employer only because it was cheaper than settled labour which required them to bear the costs of housing, sewerage, etc. The effects were disrupting to the family unit. Men, for example, left their wives alone in the rural areas for long periods of time, exposing them to all sorts of temptations and dangers. The migrant labourer on the other hand was equally exposed to the temptations of forming intimate relationships with other women in the cities. This split the family and caused further stress.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 prepared the way for the methodological provision of separate and unequal living spaces for the black races of South Africa. Group areas were carefully prescribed areas which were set aside by the state president for members of a specified group only, either to own, occupy, or both. The effect of the

'controlled area' designation was the immediate introduction of racial controls on the ownership and occupation. The occupier thus had to be of the same racial group as the owner of the property. Furthermore, the Act also permitted the then apartheid authorities wide powers to enforce its provisions. Black South Africans, those who were uprooted, had no avenue through which to fight the policies that were threatening their existence. They were uprooted against their will and the government often used coercion to 'encourage' them to leave their homes.

In the Western Cape coloured communities were uprooted from established communities close to the city and moved to the Cape Flats, an under resourced peri-urban area. In such townships basic housing was erected though family support structures, schools, clinics and stores were seldom adequate and jobs were unavailable in these areas. The Group Areas Act had huge social costs for such Western Cape communities and although it has long since been abolished, its legacy is still felt long after its demise. According to Murray & O'Regan (1990), the long-time poor, elderly, working class, minority owners and renters were either pushed out or bought out which left the poor and powerless vulnerable to economic exploitation and political abandonment. High unemployment and poverty resulted from such forced removals of vulnerable communities. Relocation brought about additional travelling costs to work places. There was also opportunity costs tied to these relocations. Workers had to travel long distances and this meant more time invested in getting to and from work, which restricted family time together. The emotional and psychological cost of resettlement included the loss of community life

and a sense of belonging, of continuity and connectedness (Field, 2001). The disruption of both social and family life together with overcrowding and a lack of resources could lead to clashes between displaced people.

Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane & Rama (2004) affirm that migration, colonisation, urbanisation and globalisation have brought about changing demands on family life and structure, causing people to separate from their families. Urbanisation and labour migration affect many aspects of family life such as sexual partners, household formation rules and patterns, care of children and the maintenance of family networks.

In a patriarchal society such as South Africa, the absence of the male head of the family from the home removed the much needed parental authority from the household. This places the mothers in the unenviable position of having to play a double role, namely that of mother as well as the head of the family. According to Field (2001) this became even more difficult where there were adolescent male members in the household who needed the firm hand of a father. Adolescent boys in such situations can easily become involved in gangs because of their need for a male role model and a sense of identity. There are many studies that have found this to be the case in areas of the Western Cape, where gangsterism is a defining feature of social context (Kinnes, 1995; Luyt & Foster, 2001; Morell, 2002 Salo,

2003). Abuse of alcohol and drugs often leads to physical violence and further disruptions of the family.

The backgrounds of all the participants in this study fit the above description. The school is situated in a low socio-economic community where many parents are blue collar workers and where the majority of the men are unemployed. Having worked as an educational psychologist at the school I could not, not notice the learner population being mostly from poor families who have been displaced from other areas and wine farms. Information on the boys is linked as they are all from the same social background and experiencing the similar problems.

2.3 FAMILY CONFIGURATION

The migrant labour system and Group Areas Act have been cited as major causes of father absence, but other family disruptions can adversely affect adolescent boys (Murray & O'Regan, 1990; Field, 2001; Daniels & Adams, 2009). In this section the family unit will be scrutinized. The literature closely links father absence to the increase in youth at risk, youth crime and the decline in academic achievements (Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996). Although the nuclear family deserves close scrutiny as the primary setting for children's emotional and behavioural development, a substantial proportion of children are now reared in other social contexts, particularly single-parent families. So, too, many children are being reared by parents who themselves are little more than children, often under adverse

environmental conditions and in the context of family discord which often is the case in South Africa. This was observed by Van Wyk (2007) at a day clinic in the Western Cape where 50 teenagers attended the prenatal clinic in March of 2005. As an educator in the area she encountered young pregnant girls and observed the insecurities, confusion, ignorance and helplessness of these young girls who were seemingly on their own without support from their families or boyfriends.

Coupled with the unique Western Cape circumstances the global shift in family configuration has been linked to teenage problems. One such configuration is the absent father unit. Families can lose fathers through divorce, which can be particularly devastating for boys at an age where male supervision and discipline are needed. Divorce or death could create a fatherless household. These circumstances could result in financial hardship, a lowering of the family's socio-economic status and a lack of social support for those who are left in the family unit. Death of the father deprives boys of a male role model and they may be subjected to changed economic circumstances as well as lack of discipline (McCallum & Golombok, 2004). The literature reveals that parental death reduces children's self-esteem and increases the incidence of depression, anxiety, behavioural disturbances, academic problems, somatic complaints and suicidal acts (Griesel-Roux, Ebersöhn, Smit & Elloff, 2005: 253).

A boy may be the son of an unmarried mother as a result of an unwanted teenage pregnancy and abandonment by or only intermittent availability of the father who does not play a significant role in parenting. Boys may lack a father figure because of the mother's choice of adoption or insemination in which case the identity of the father may be unknown. Lesbian parenting may lead to the absence of a male role model when the mother does not want father involvement (McCallum & Golombok, 2004). Migratory labour system fathers may have to migrate to urban areas where employment is available leaving mother to cope with child rearing. Incarceration can also mean that a father has no contact with or involvement in parenting.

2.4 FATHER ABSENCE AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

Various global research initiatives have been undertaken around father absence in families (Popenoe, 1988, 1996; Whitehead, 1993; Blankenhorn, 1995) and these findings appear to apply to the South African context also, as the link between father absence and social problems amongst boys appear to be global. Some analysts argue that growing up with a single mother is the primary cause of most serious social problems including poverty, high school dropout rate and delinquency (Popenoe, 1988, 1996; Whitehead, 1993; Blankenhorn, 1995). Others argue that poverty and economic insecurity may cause father absence and adolescent behavioural problems (Skolnick, 1991; Stacy, 1993).

Sharma and Silbereisen's (2007) research on mother-headed single-parent families found that adolescent boys living in such family units display delinquent behaviour, in comparison to those living with their biological parents. Their findings suggest that any negative impact on young boys of not having a father figure is counteracted to some extent by State support to single mothers, who, in the absence of a co-provider, bear the sole responsibility of raising the child. Raising their child on their own was partly responsible for the tension between mothers and their adolescent children in a single-mother household (Laursen 2005). In such a context, the additional support from the state to increase her parental involvement, and consequently her attention, was found to be a key positive factor in determining young boys' social and academic outcomes, more recently by Lee, Kushner and Cho (2007) and Hartos and Power (2000).

Research by Raspberry (2005) amongst African-American families in America found father absence to be the bane of the black community, predisposing its children, particularly boys, to school failure, criminal behaviour, and economic hardship. Furthermore, this grim cycle repeats itself inter-generational. Ministers of religion have blamed it on the decline of marriage (Raspberry 2005). Raspberry also observed that fatherless boys ended up becoming ineligible as husbands though not less likely to become fathers. Their male children, too, fall into the pattern that renders them ineligible as husbands.

The effects of father absence from an early age can influence adolescent development. The transactional model of development supports the contention that

early experiences of father absence do affect the child's self description, which in turn contributes to the types of self attributions developed in adolescence (Denny & Martin, 2004). Beaty's findings (1995) support this. He found that boys with absent fathers prior to age 5 show more dysfunction with respect to self-concept development in adolescence, as well as difficulties in peer relationship adjustment.

Other research shows that children who grow up apart from their biological fathers do less well at school than children who grow up with both natural parents. They are also less likely to finish high school and attend college. When a father lives in a separate household, there is a loss of parental resources. In addition to the lack of resources, such households lack male role models who can discuss problems and who could discipline and supervise boys. According to McLanahan (2000), there is less parenting to go around in a fatherless family. The presence of a warm and affectionate father can help a child develop positive self-esteem and can influence gender role behaviour. Boys can learn from their fathers about growing up as male, male interests, activities and social behaviour (Chen, 2007).

Adolescents who are exposed to absent-father households may manifest different behavioural problems. The psychological effect of father absence was highlighted by Kirshner (1992) whose psychodynamic model postulated that there can be a splitting of the ego by the father being disavowed as an entity. He found that men who grew up without a father have significant neuroses. He found that they were unable to use images or memories of the father as an organizing focus for identification as they had no experiences to draw from. These men also had a corresponding perpetuation of an apparently dyadic pre-oedipal bond with a feared and powerful mother.

Hamilton (1977) observed influencing factors such as the child's age, duration of father absence, mother's mental state, socio-economic status of family, closeness of substitute father figure and father/child relationship before the father left the family. Peretti and Di Vittorio's (1992) family deficit model revealed that there were feelings of abandonment, loss of self esteem and a sense of alienation.

The findings of studies on families in high conflict show that father absence may actually be preferable to abusive fathers (Partridge & Kotler, 1987). The development of the adolescents could be hampered by being raised in single-parent homes or in foster care as a result of a high extramarital birth rate, the divorce rate and AIDS (Gouws et al., 2008). The support for single-mother households can vary according to the society in which it is situated. In Germany, for example, the state provides subsidies to single mothers so that they spend less time in the workplace and thus have more parenting time for their sons (Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007). Whilst this may help to compensate for father absence, it does not provide a male role model for the boy child.

2.5 TYPES OF AT-RISK BEHAVIOUR

Most research on absent fathers has been conducted in first world countries such as the USA, Great Britain and Germany. (Kowaleski-Jones & Dunifon, 2006). Researchers have examined the behavioural consequences of boys growing up without a father. There seems to be commonalities in their findings. School drop-out, crime, violence and gangsterism are identified as recurring problems. Dobson (2002)

states that boys suffering from the absence or non involvement of fathers are twice as likely to drop out of school, twice as likely to go to jail and four times as likely to need treatment for emotional and behavioural problems as boys with fathers. He also states that boys are particularly vulnerable at puberty when a father's supervision, guidance and love are particularly needed. One of the primary objectives of a father is to help their sons identify their gender assignments and understand what it means to be a man. In their research Biddulph (2004) and Comanar (1999) echo Dobson's strategy that boys with absent fathers are statistically more likely to be violent, get hurt and get into trouble, do poorly in school and be members of gangs. Research conducted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED 2007) on problems in schools as reflected in the following three graphs, show adolescent boys to be those most likely to be at risk.

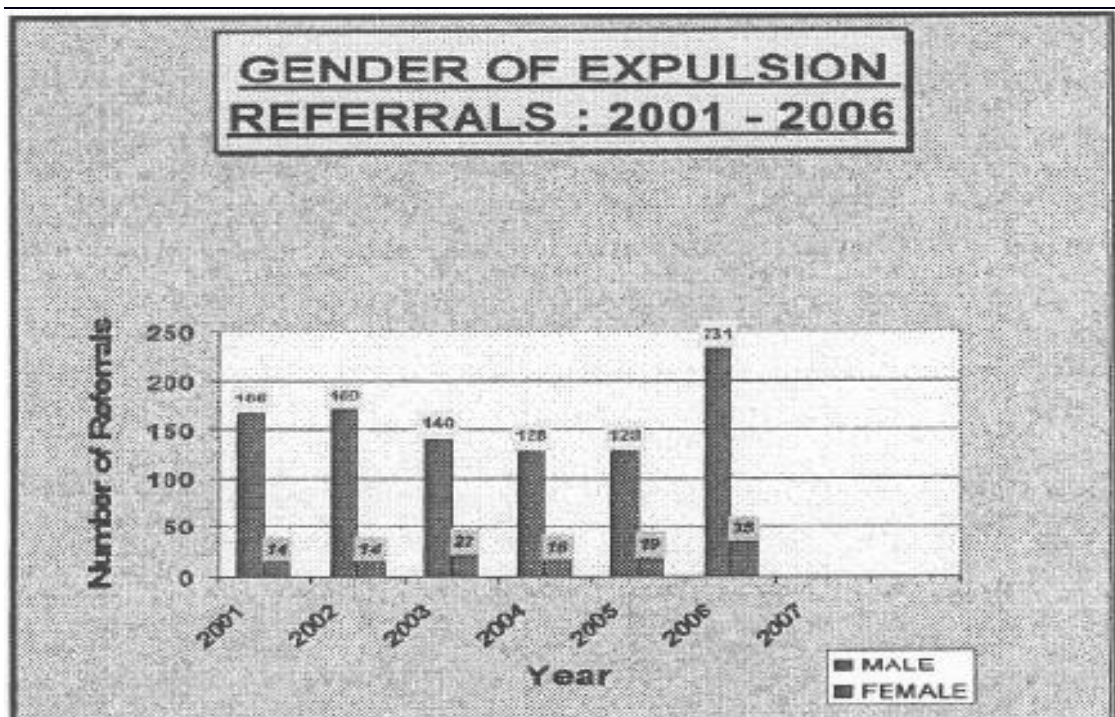


Figure 2.1: Gender of expulsion referrals (WCED, 2007:9)

The graph above indicates the number of expulsions in schools in the Western Cape from 2001 to 2006. The number of boys expelled during this time was far greater than that of girls. It would appear that boys are more inclined to get into trouble than girls. The schools where this research was conducted indicated that 50% of their boys were growing up without a father. The research focused on boys in Grades 8 to 10, which, according to the WCED are the grades where most of the expulsions took place.

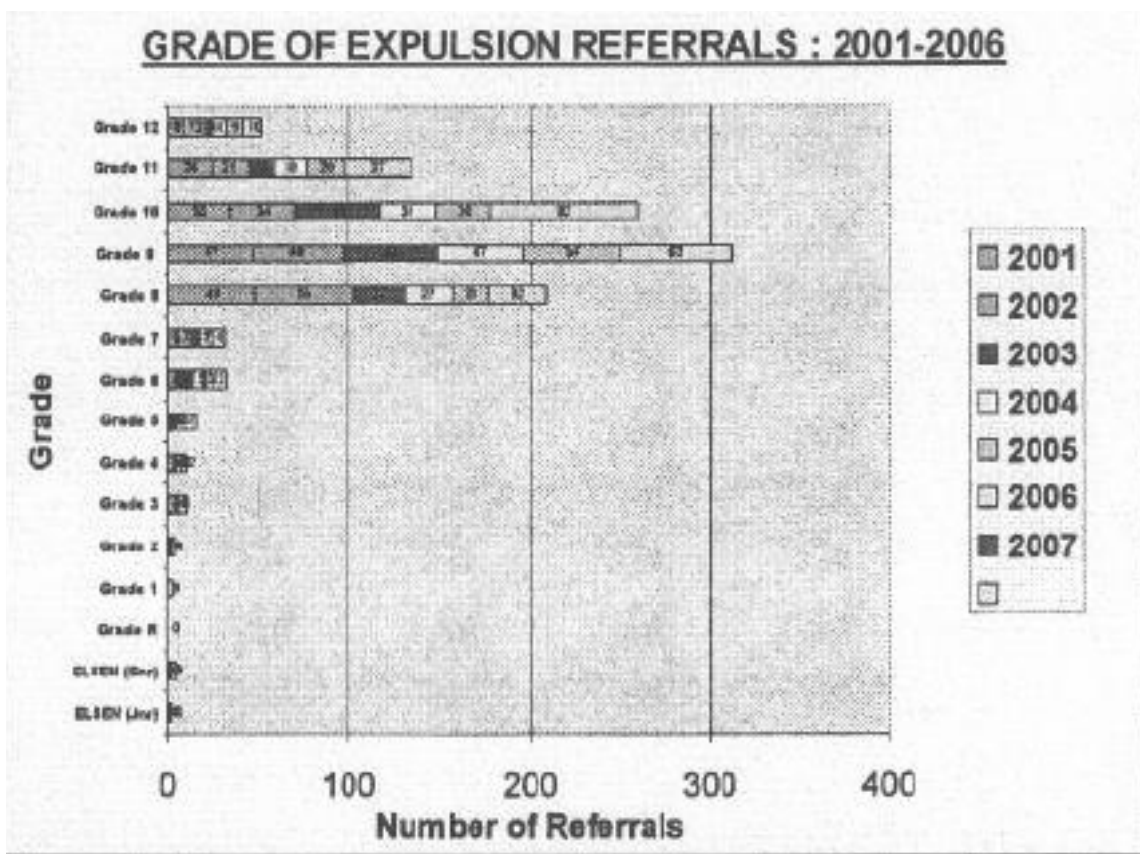


Figure 2.2: Grade of expulsion referrals (WCED, 2007:11)

This graph indicates the grades of expulsion referrals from 2001 to 2006. The results show that Grades 8, 9 and 10 had the most referrals.

The WCED study also identified specific crimes that were linked to reasons for expulsions. From Figure 3 below crimes such as drug abuse (65%), assault and violence (50%) and improper conduct (50%) were the most prominent.

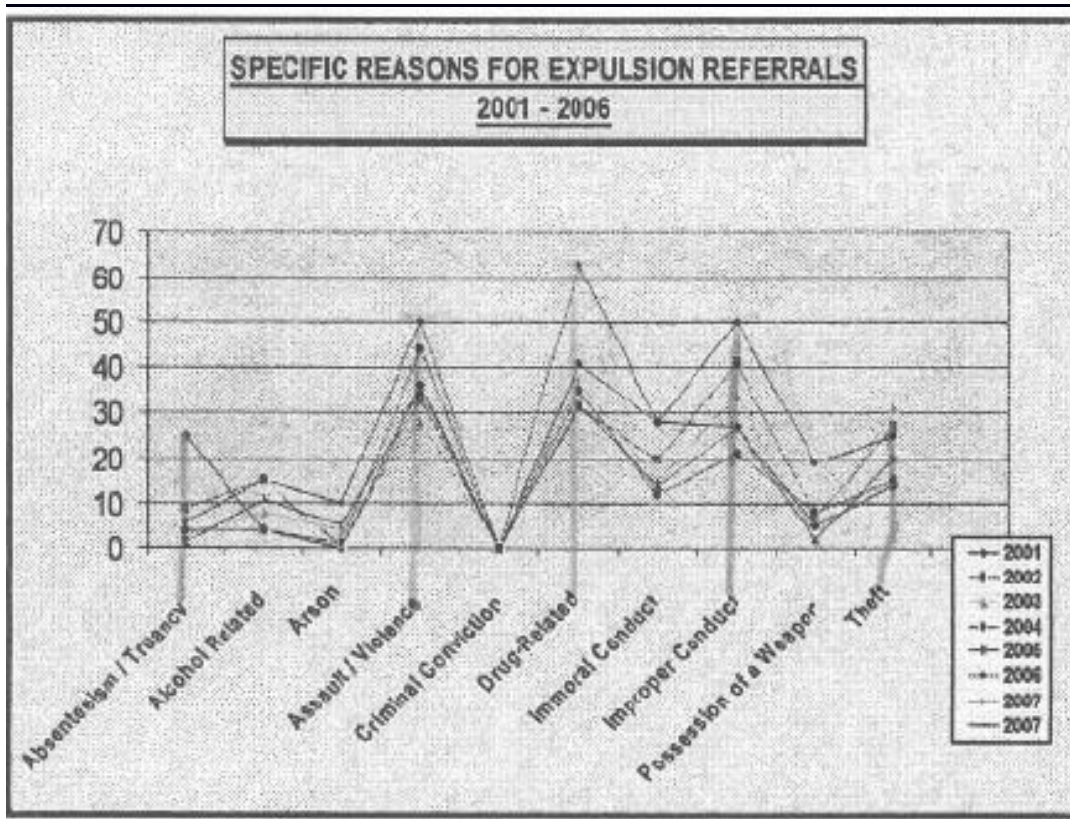


Figure 2.3: Specific reasons for expulsion referrals (WCED, 2007:14)

These three figures were included as support for the argument that research on adolescent boys who grow up without fathers is important as it could help us understand the challenges that such boys face while growing up.

2.6 AT-RISK YOUTH

At risk denotes a set of cause-effect dynamics that place an individual child or adolescent in danger of future negative outcomes. At risk designates a situation that is not necessarily current (although we sometimes use the term in that sense too) but that can be anticipated in the absence of intervention (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). According to McWhirter et al., there are five levels of risk, ranging from minimal risk to at-risk category activity along a continuum. The following graphic denotes these categories.

TABLE 2.1: AT-RISK CONTINUUM	
MINIMAL RISK	Include young people from homes with loving, caring relationships, good Schools, few stressors and minimal risk for future challenges.
REMOTE RISK	Children from impoverished, dysfunctional family, from poor schools in an economically marginalized neighbourhood is potentially further along the at-risk continuum.
HIGH RISK	A child may be pushed further along the continuum if there are negative attitudes and aggression in his behaviour. Other characteristics which suggest 'high risks' include conduct problems, impulsivity, anxiety and depression.
IMMINENT RISK	A child's participation in gateway behaviour can be self-destructive and can progress to increasing deviant behaviour. For example, aggression towards others could be a gateway to juvenile delinquency. Cigarette use is a gateway to alcohol and marijuana use, which could be a gateway to harder drugs.

AT-RISK CATEGORY ACTIVITY	At-risk category activity defines the young person who is participating in the activities which define the at-risk category. Activity can escalate as well as generalize to other categories.
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(McWhirter et al., 2007)

Research about at-risk youth growing up without a father figure has focused mainly on first world societies. While many of the consequences of growing up without a father manifest themselves within South African children, the research does not take into account some of the unique problems which currently affect South African society. In South Africa the problem is exacerbated by great poverty, unemployment, crime and violence which could lead to dysfunctional families. Under these conditions there is an increased likelihood of family disintegration.

Both internal and external experiences of young boys growing up without a father figure influence their behaviour. Sharma and Silbereisen (2007) suggest that the problem not be studied in isolation of the contexts that impact on it. The adolescent boy grows up as part of a larger system of family, school, education, and community. Furthermore, the social divisions of class, race and ethnicity impact on his experiences. The interaction of these micro systems ought to be studied as part of the problem.

It is therefore appropriate to employ an eco-systemic approach, which builds upon the general systems theory and the ecological theory, to understand the phenomenon of young boys growing up without a father figure. The general systems

theory professes that individuals are micro-systems that are part of a larger macro-system, whereas the ecological theory focuses on the dialectic interaction of different levels of systems with each other. This approach can provide a holistic framework to understand the phenomenon of young boys growing up without a father figure.

For this study the adolescent boy, the subject of the research, will be researched as being part of a larger system of family, school, education system and community (Kowaleski-Jones and Dunifon, 2006). Each of these systems is, however, formed by mini systems that interact with each other. The eco-systemic approach also provides an opportunity to understand the role of government policies in the experiences of these young boys.

2.7 CONCLUSION

While the above-mentioned literature provides useful insights into the phenomenon of young boys growing up without a father figure, there are two particular aspects of the literature that point to limitations of existing research. Firstly, most of the research studies on this important topic are based on data from developed countries, particularly from the United States of America, Great Britain and Europe. The social context of these countries is substantially different from that of South Africa, where this study will be undertaken. Secondly, most of the research studies are quantitative in nature and conducted by either economists or sociologists using longitudinal data. They invariably control different independent variables, such as the socio-economic status of the family, to isolate the impact of growing up without a

father figure on the social and academic outcome of young boys. While such research is primarily useful in identifying the strength of different variables, a qualitative methodology will instead allow us to understand the phenomenon of growing up without a father figure.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the literature review to inform this study on youth growing up without a father figure. In this chapter my research design and methodology will be unpacked within the research paradigm that I considered most suitable for the problem I investigated. This study investigated the experiences of at-risk youth growing up without fathers in their lives in an area of the Western Cape. A scientific research process was undertaken. According to Neumann (2000: 2), research is “a way of going about finding answers to questions”. Research is scientific in nature and can therefore not be blindly undertaken and thus needs to be thoroughly planned beforehand.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Specific paradigms form the basis of research methodology (Waghid, 2002). The researcher must understand what he or she wants to achieve with the research, so that a choice can be made as to which paradigm will be the best to research his or her goal. A paradigm is “a ... framework for observation and understanding that shapes both what we see and how we understand it” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:645).

According to Tracey (2002:42), a paradigm is sometimes referred to as “grammar of thinking”, “a form of discourse”, “a shape of consciousness” or a “form of rationality”.

Three research paradigms can be distinguished within educational research, namely positivism, interpretive and critical paradigms (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Merriam, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Within a positivistic paradigm reality is seen as a stable and measurable entity (Merriam, 1998). When a phenomenon is studied from a critical paradigm, reality is seen as a “fluid and variable set of social constructions” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:6). Researchers who work from an interpretivistic paradigm see reality being studied as representative of people’s experiences and their external environment (Merriam, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). For the purpose of this research project I decided to work from an interpretive/constructivist paradigm which positioned me to interpret the subjects’ realities as representative of their experiences and their external environments (Merriam, 2002). This paradigm seems to offer a more fruitful and human way of doing research. This paradigm is reinforced by everyday practices which offer a great deal of scope for research in schools (Scott & Usher, 1999:30).

I used an explorative, qualitative approach to help me understand the experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father figure. The main characteristic of explorative research is its focus on describing the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Masters, 1998), in this case the experiences of the adolescent boys growing up without a father figure in a South

African context. The focus of the study was on the ways in which each research subject interpreted the experience of growing up without a father figure and the reality which he built around this. As these are individual beings who are influenced by their own unique life experiences, I anticipated that the data would reflect multiple constructed realities which I should look at. In my interaction with the adolescent boys, I expected to hear them describe their experiences and reactions to growing up without a father figure. I had to interpret it in light of their personalities, their domestic backgrounds, how they constructed reality around the issue of not having a father, as well as the interaction between me and them and between the youth themselves. As stated by Carr and Kemmis (1986:86): "Social reality can only be understood by understanding the subjective meanings of individuals". This, to me, justified my decision that the study be framed within an interpretive/constructivist paradigm.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AS METHODOLOGY

The purpose of qualitative research can vary according to the research paradigm and methods used. This qualitative study seeks to develop knowledge on the experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father figure in relation to various social "systems" interacting with these individuals. The aim of the research is to expand the knowledge base on the effects of father absence in the lives of boys growing up within a particular South African context. In order to understand the problem, the following research questions were posed:

- What are at-risk adolescent boys' experiences of growing up without a father?
- What are the boys' perceptions of the roles of the father in the family?
- What are the challenges of growing up without a father?
- How does the family accommodate father absence?

Qualitative research is a naturalistic enquiry and mostly describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs and thoughts and persons in their natural settings (Creswell, 1994). The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of participants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. The research is concerned with social phenomenon and attempts to understand them from the participants' perspective. Understanding can be acquired by analysing the contents of the participants and narrating participants' meanings for the situations and events. A plan is required to help with choosing participants and to begin data collection. This is an emergent design. Qualitative research allows a description and interpretation of a phenomenon in the context of which it was experienced and understood from the participants' point of view (Mash & Wolfe, 2002).

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A qualitative research methodology was selected using semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and the creation of collages as means of data collection. The different research methods applied in this research form the nucleus of this study.

According to Bean (2006; 357) the different methods serve as “the tool used to accomplish part of the study, specifically, how to obtain and analyse data”.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to ask questions about feelings, emotions and thoughts as well as past behaviour of an individual and how individuals had organised their life around the meanings they had given it. Information may be gathered which, according to Mouton (2001), has the potential to supplement and re-orientate the researcher’s current understanding of a situation. Patton (1990) suggests that qualitative research is not a set recipe; rather it involves learning through doing. Merriam (1998) states it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings. By using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, the researcher works according to the principle of interactions. Participants construct their social worlds in collaboration with the research (Silverman, 1993). Questions were designed to encourage interviewees to express their individual experiences of growing up without fathers and were informed by the knowledge gained from the literature review as well as my own experiences of growing up without a father figure.

According to Silverman (1993:95), this type of interview allows respondents to use their “unique ways of defining the world”. It assumes no fixed sequence of questions

and allows respondents to raise important issues not contained in the schedule; therefore, to elicit data that provided an authentic insight into the adolescent boys' experiences (Silverman, 1993:91). In these semi-structured interviews I asked open-ended questions which permitted the participants to elaborate on their answers. An interview guide (Appendix E) was created to structure the format of the interviews through relevant themes that were listed. Each participant's interview was recorded and transcribed as a means to aid data analysis.

The interviews were conducted over two days at the school. The school guidance counsellor allowed me to use her room. Interviews were all thirty minutes long. Structures were put in place to work with the participants after the interviews should they need counselling.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews

The individualized semi-structured interviews were my main form of data collection but I also used focus group interviews as a secondary method of data collection. Basch (1987:411) defines the focus group interview as "a qualitative approach to learning about population subgroups with respect to conscious, semi conscious and unconscious psychological and sociological characteristics and process". According to Krueger (1988:18), a focus group interview is "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment". I used focus group interviews to bring the ten adolescent

boys growing up without fathers, the subjects of the study, as a homogenous group, together to share their knowledge and experiences with each other. The advantage of focus group interviews lies in the group interaction when participants get involved with each other in exchanging ideas and experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Group interaction and personal reflection during focus group interviews can further lead to the collection of high quality data, if successfully facilitated by the researcher. The researcher must also be aware of the personal and interpersonal dynamics of the group (Kelly; 1999:289). Careful planning with respect to participants, the environment, and questions to be asked is key to conducting effective focus groups.

The focus groups session took place three weeks after the interviews. This allowed me time to transcribe the interviews and to carefully plan and design the questions I was to ask during the focus group session. The session lasted for an hour and I was allowed to use one of the class rooms at school.

3.4.3 The Collage

After the focus group interviews, each participant had to engage in the compilation of a collage. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999) defines a collage as a formal work of art, primarily in the form of visual art, made from an assemblage of different forms thus creating a new whole. The decision to use this as a method of data collection is supported by the view that young people often find visuals a more user-friendly means to communicate their innermost views that they find difficult to express

verbally (Daniels, 2006). Art is a means of creative self-expression that can cross the boundaries of race, culture, class, geographical setting and age. Furthermore, it has been found to be a universal language of self-expression for children. According to Harper (2005), image-based research as an evolving method of qualitative inquiry, has until recently been underutilized in fieldwork and inadequately focused on in methodological literature (Daniels, 2006). In this study each participant was asked to create a collage. Materials in the form of clippings from print media were collected and used to create a visual depicting the participant's life world as he experienced it without a father figure. This gave the participants who were uncomfortable in talking about their personal experiences, and those who have limited vocabulary, an opportunity to share their experiences in a creative, though non-threatening way. The collage also helped to stimulate their thoughts around their individual situations and circumstances.

This session lasted over one hour and 15 minutes and was arranged during school time. The participants were provided with newspapers, magazines, kokis, and pairs of scissors, glue and crayons. The instruction was for them to compile a collage depicting their experiences of growing up in a house hold without a farther.

3.4.4 Observation

Research is limited when it concentrates only on the verbal descriptions of the participants' experiences (Kelly & Emery, 2002). According to Heck (2006) and

Sherman and Webb (1988), observation gives the researcher the opportunity to assess how the respondents assign meaning to their social and cultural environments. The aim of observation is to increase the understanding of the context in which interaction is taking place (Patton, 2002). Observation gave me an opportunity to hone in on participants' physical interactions and emotions and in this way more aspects of their personal experiences could be understood. During the interviews I focused on observing the emotions of the participants when I posed certain questions. The data obtained during observation were written up in the form of notes.

3.5 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

The context was a secondary school on the Cape Flats of the Western Cape. Site selection was important as it maximized the possibility of participants coming from similar backgrounds. The school was situated in a disadvantaged community on the Cape Flats. Poor socio-economic conditions, poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, crime, gangsterism and violence are part of the worlds in which these adolescent boys grow up.

Out of a total of 432 boys who were the population for this study, a purposive sample population was drawn. Ten boys enrolled in Grades 8, 9 and 10 made up the sample population for this study. With the assistance of the school guidance counsellor

these ten boys were selected purposefully according to the specified criteria of being adolescents, in certain grades and growing up without a father. Purposeful sampling entails selecting subject-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 1990:169). For the purpose of this research it enabled me to collect specific information from a small sample of participants. Site consent to conduct the interviews and the collages was obtained from each boy (Appendix C) and from his parent or guardian (Appendix D).

3.6 RECORDING OF DATA

The data consisted of the transcriptions of personal and focus group interviews, the collages and observation field notes made during these sessions. All interviews were recorded to ensure that data were not lost. Before the audio recordings of the interviews were made, I explained the purpose of the recording to each participant and also asked for their permission to do so. After each interview the recordings were transcribed verbatim. This process is essential for data analysis as valuable data can get lost if it is not properly and thoroughly written up. Powney and Watts (1987:145-146) state that 'truth' lies on the tape, it becomes objective fact through transcription, whilst the researcher's own understanding of what was happening and being said in the interview is relegated to 'unreliable data'. Observations of non-verbal communication were added as field notes to the transcribed interviews. Interviews were conducted in a private room at the school to ensure confidentiality. I endeavoured to establish good rapport with the participants which enabled them to speak freely and in depth about their experiences. I returned the interview transcripts

to the subjects for validation via a “member check” (Babbie & Mouton; 2001:275). Once each transcription was completed the data were ready for analysis.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis is the process of bringing order to the data, organising what is there into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units (Patton, 1990:144). I read and re-read the transcribed interviews. This enabled themes common to each participant to be revealed and provided a preliminary analysis of the data before they were deconstructed and coded. By reading and re-reading the transcripts I sensitized myself to relevant ideas and themes. Doing this enabled me to access the interviewees’ frame of reference (Burnard, 1991).

I coded each word, line or paragraph in an attempt to encapsulate the subject’s meanings. Here I grouped related codes into categories. As further data were collected, I compared them with existing categories. These categories were given a name that captured the essence of the concept they contained. Once I formed the categories I looked for links between them. Through this process I gradually built up ideas about how the categories or concepts within them related to each other. Once I formed explanations about the categories and concepts, plausible alternative explanations were considered (Marshall & Rosmann, 1995).

Thereafter I looked for the main category that linked all other categories. The processes of analysis lead me to the core categories. The analysis was completed when the categories were defined; the relationship between them established and they were integrated into findings. The research report is “grounded” by using quotations from the interviewees (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The reason for doing this was to describe each participant’s social world so vividly so that the reader can almost see and hear the subjects. From the above it follows that data analysis is a process during which the phenomenon studied is broken up into different components. These components are reorganised with the help of accumulated data and combined in new creative ways to form new meaning at the end (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

3.8 VERIFICATION OF DATA

The quality of qualitative research is continuously questioned with regard to validity and reliability which are characteristic norms to which the standards of qualitative research are measured. A set of criteria was developed by qualitative researchers to which a study must comply before it can be regarded as of a high standard. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) formulated the following as criteria to be considered:

- Validity
- Transferability
- Reliability
- Trustworthiness

Seale (2001) recommends that the qualitative researcher has to continuously reflect on these criteria during the research process to ensure that a high standard for the research project is maintained. Validity indicates the extent to which the researcher and other interested persons believe and trust the research design as well as the research results (Davis, 2004; Toma, 2006). In this research validity was assured by my use of three methods to verify the data that I collected from the participants. The repetition of common themes in the responses of these participants, however, indicated the validity of the data.

Reliability indicates the extent to which the study and the results obtained can be repeated (Toma, 2006). According to Seale (2001), auditing by means of accurate documentation of data, methods used, decisions made and the final product are attempts to ensure reliability of the study. A detailed description of the environment in which the study took place was provided to ensure transferability, in this case a high school in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape. This would enable the reader to decide whether the findings are relevant to their familiar environment (Seale, 2001; Toma, 2006). When validity, reliability and transferability of data are high, trustworthiness will also be high. Toma (2006) states that trustworthiness indicates the extent to which persons outside the study can confirm the data and findings. Trustworthiness also confirms that the data are unbiased (Davis, 2004). Throughout the research project, attention was given to the above-mentioned criteria to which qualitative research should adhere to ensure research of a high standard.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mertens (1998:23) suggests that ethical considerations should be a fundamental part of the research design in any research study and should be an integral part of

the entire research process. This is to prevent the recurrence of some of the inequities which occurred in the past in the guise of research. In his view (Mertens 1998:23), research should be guided by the ethical principles and six norms for research identified in the 1978 Belmont Report by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioural Research. I applied these principles in this study, as the participants were fully informed about the nature of the study and assured of confidentiality. The identities of the participants remained anonymous. The name of the school and area where the school is situated were also changed.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked for their signed consent to participate (Appendix C). The 10 participants understood that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Provision was made for counselling in the event of participants experiencing trauma during the interviews. As the participants were minors, written consent was sought from their parents or legal guardians (Appendix D). The participants will also have access to a summary or the full report of the results once the study is completed.

3.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter I presented the research design for the study. I explained what justified my choice of a qualitative methodology and methods. I described the analysis and interpretation of data process, and that its findings will be compiled in a

research report. In the next chapter a rich and complete description of the research findings will be provided in the form of themes and categories which surfaced during the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 the focus was on presenting the research design and methodology that suited the study. In this chapter I will present the data that were collected. The process of analysis was started with reducing the data, and organizing and presenting it in tables and matrixes. This process was deemed important as it allowed me to account for all data and to bring order to all the data that were collected (Daniels, 2007). A discussion of the methods of data collection and analysis will follow and the findings that emerged from the process will be presented. This will be followed by an interpretation of the findings of the research.

The methods of data collection had to produce information that could capture the thoughts and experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father figure. The purpose of the data collection was to harness adolescent boys' personal interpretations of their experiences of growing up without a father figure. The data had to answer the following research questions that this study posed:

- What are at-risk adolescent boys' experiences of growing up without a father?
- What are the boys' perceptions of the roles of the father in the family?
- What are the challenges of growing up without a father?

- How does the family accommodate father absence?

Data were obtained by means of semi-structured interviews (SI in coded data), a focus group discussion (FG), a collage (CC), and personal reflection notes (PR) and observation (OB). The primary data collection method in this study was the semi-structured interview. The focus group interview was used as an opportunity to validate other individual data by opening these up for further discussion amongst the participants in the group. The collages were used as stimuli as well as probing tools. Daniels (2006) has found this to be a valuable method to use with populations such as children to get them to open up about topics that they are hesitant to talk about. The collage was an alternative way for the participants to express their views about the role of fathers in the lives of male adolescents. Strength of the collage is that it provided the less vocal participants an opportunity to express themselves better.

4.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The research population was restricted to one high school situated in a low socio-economic community in the Western Cape. The population sample consisted of ten adolescent boys who were growing up without a father figure. The community in which these adolescent boys lived housed mainly blue collar workers with a high unemployment rate. Most of the dwellings are low-cost housing built by the state. Two of the ten participants live in low-cost housing while the other eight live in corrugated iron structures or Wendy houses in the back yards with family or friends. Crime and violence are rife and there are many shebeens in the area.

4.2.1 The participants

The ten participants were selected from Grades 8, 9 and 10. The adolescents were all aged between 14 and 18 years. Of the ten participants, Adam and Ivan were the oldest, being 18 years of age. Ben was the youngest at 14 years of age. Table 4.1 provides relevant demographic data such as who the participants lived with and the employment status of their mothers.

TABLE 4.1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS				
<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Mother Employed</i>	<i>Lives with</i>
Adam*	18	10	Yes	MT,GM/GF
Ben	14	8	Yes	MT
Carl	17	10	No	MT
Don	16	9	Yes	MT/GM
Eric	15	8	No	MT/GM
Fred	16	9	No	MT/A
Glen	17	9	No	MT
Henk	15	8	Yes	MT/MB

Ivan	18	10	No	MT/GM
Jack	17	10	No	MT

*Pseudonyms were used for all participants. MT=Mother; GM= Grandmother; GF= Grandfather; A = Aunt; MB = Mothers boyfriend.

4.2.2 Implementation of the research

The participants of the study all attended a state high school that resides under the management of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). I therefore had to seek written permission from the WCED to gain access to the school setting. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the WCED for the period 21 February 2009 to 30 September 2009. The research was initially approved for 2008 but due to time constraints was only conducted in 2009.

In May 2009 I contacted the school for permission to gain access to do the research. The principal was very positive and supportive about the research topic. During this time I made all the necessary arrangements for dates and times for the interviews and the focus group discussion. This was done with consideration of the teaching programme as I wanted to cause as little disruption as possible to the school population. The interviews were conducted during the second week of May and transcribed. The focus group interviews and construction of the collages took place seven weeks later.

4.2.3 Data analysis and interpretation

The collected data consisted of transcribed semi-structured interviews, observation notes, focus group discussions, personal reflections and interpretations of the collages. The different data collection methods used in this research produced a large amount of information. As the interviews took up to sixty minutes per interview it was necessary to reduce the amount of data to simplify the interpretation. The data reduction process had to be done in a very responsible way so that valuable information did not get lost in the process.

Whilst transcribing the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, collages and observation notes, I began formulating possible themes. After the transcriptions, personal reflections and observation notes were worked through thoroughly, a list of themes and sub-themes was compiled. I grouped together similar themes and colour coded them. For themes which did not fit into any particular group I created additional groups. Thereafter I changed the themes to categories and provided the categories with a descriptive phrase. Similar themes were grouped under one category. Quotations from individual subjects indicated within SI's, FG and CC were also used to clarify findings. I used this data to confirm the identified categories. I organised the coded data into five main categories which were labelled as follows:

- Family dynamics
- Emotional reflections of the participants
- Participants' views of the role of the father in the family.
- Educational challenges faced by the participants.

- Manifestaion of at-risk behaviour

I shall now discuss the above-mentioned categories.

4.3 FAMILY DYNAMICS

I started every interview by collecting demographic data on the participant's family background. The data about their family background. The information about the families within which the ten adolescents are growing up covered data on the family structure, the identified authority figures in the family and the existing dynamics. Finally, it also provides information on who the male figures in the boys' lives are.

The themes of this data on the family dynamics are represented in Table 4.2. I labelled these themes as structure, roles, resources, father figure and family relationships and discuss them individually.

TABLE 4.2: FAMILY DYNAMICS

Theme	Sub-theme	Adam	Ben	Carl	Don	Eric	Fred	Glen	Henk	Ivan	Jack
Structure	Gender	2F/3M	3F/1M	2F/1M	3F/2M	3F/2M	1F/1M	2F/3M	1F/2M	1F/3M	4F/3M
	Age	8-73	12-39	7-42	11-63	12-59	11-41	7-42	9-36	12-62	7=36
	Size	5	4	3	5	6	2	5	3	4	7
Roles	Provider	MT/E	MT/E	MT/O	MT/E	MT/E	MT/O	MA/UN	MT/E	MT/E	MT/U

	Prote ctor	GM/Gf	MT	MT	GM	GM	MT	MA	MT	GM	MT
	Disci plinar ian	GM	MT	MT	GM	GM		MA		GM	MT
Resourc es	Physi cal	LA	LA	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
	Fina ncial	M	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	M	I
Father Figure	Male R/M	U	U	MB	OB	OB	N	N	N	N	N
Fam Dyn	V C	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
		Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N

(Key: F=Female; M=Male; MT=Mother; GM=Grandmother; GF=Grandfather; MA=Aunt; E=Employed; O=Piecework; UN=Unemployed; LA=Low-cost housing and other; P=Backyarders; U=Uncle; I= not managing, MB=Mother's boyfriend, OB=Older brother, N=Non, Y=Yes-Violence-Communication)

In Table 4.2 the first row provides information on the number of male and female members in the family. In Adams family there are 2 females, his mother and younger sister and three males, two younger brothers and himself. The second row provides the age ranges of the family members. Ben's family, for example consists of himself, a sibling of 12 and his 39 year old mother. When one looks at the family size, these are reasonably small families. However, when one looks at the composition of the families they do not correspond with the typical nuclear family that consists of mother, father and Idren. In all ten families the mother is the provider for the families. Only two mothers in fulltime employment while the mothers of the other eight participants provide for them financially by doing piecework. The table also

indicates male role models in the form of an uncle (U), mother's boy friend (MB) and an older brother (OB).

4.3.1 Structure

Most of the participants grew up in female-only households. Others indicated growing up in composite and extended families that included a grandparent or relative of the parent. Don, for example lives with his mother and grandmother in his grandmother's house. Glen's mother's auntie lives with them. Their immediate family sizes ranged from two to seven per household. Most of the participants have siblings, except Fred who is an only child. Their family members living with them range in age from 7 to 73 years. The participants referred to the extended family members who were living in their household as part of their own family. As mentioned by Carl:

To me family are the people who cares about you...people who looks after you ... people who are there when you need them ... like my grandmother

4.3.2 Roles in the family

In the absence of fathers, their mothers are identified as the breadwinners of their households. Only Glen's family is supported by his aunt. When asked whether their

mothers were employed, six stated that their mothers were in permanent employment, two took on piece work and two were unemployed.

Parents are often expected to be the protector of the child. In these families, this was not necessarily the case. The grandmothers of Adam, Ivan and Eric seem to hold a very important place in their lives, as the following excerpts show

Adam: My grandmother is always there for us ... she will kill for us.

Ivan: My grandmother looks after us and keeps us safe.

Eric: My granny always comes in the night to see if I am home.

When probing their responses about the roles of these women in their lives, two of the participants felt the need to assert their male hood. Jack commented that "...I don't need a guard to look out for me" while Ben commented that his mother needed him "...to protect them". The women in their lives, either their mother or their grandmother, are their disciplinarians. Adam described his grandmother as very strict, a woman who "often beats us if we don't listen to her". Don's grandmother checks up on his movements and expresses concern when he comes home late at night. Both Adam's and Ivan's mother seem to have abdicated their responsibilities as disciplinarians, and seem to compensate by meeting their material needs. The following data support this finding:

Adam: My mother tries to do everything for me she also buys me whatever I want.

She said that she is not going to make me suffer because of my father.

Ivan: My mother spoils me I can do as I like and get if I want.

The participants seem to exhibit more respect for their grandmothers than for their mothers. Based on the data, discipline is lacking in their homes. They ascribe the lack of discipline to a number of factors, such as their mothers' attitudes towards their sons, the mothers engaging in alcohol and drug abuse and generally neglecting their parental responsibilities. Henk mentioned that he very often felt that he had no one to discipline him as his mother is always too tired after a hard day's work. He said: "When my mother comes from her work she eats and goes to bed." Jack finds that his mother is always drunk when he gets home from school.

4.3.3 Resources

Their descriptions of their home conditions show that eight of the ten adolescents live in very poor conditions. Only Adam and Ben lived in brick dwellings. These, however were not owned by their families and can be described as sub-economic housing. The other eight all lived in backyard dwellings. These dwellings were built from corrugated iron sheets or wood. During the focus group and construction of the collage the participants spoke freely about how they experienced poverty in their homes. These poor conditions were mainly due to financial constraints as eight of the ten participants indicated that there is not enough money to provide for their basic needs. Carl's mother earns money by doing odd jobs, and sometimes she

does not earn enough money for food. Glen's family live off a welfare grant which is not enough for the family to live off. According to Glen, "we every time go to bed with no food."

Adam and Ivan mentioned that having their grandmothers living with them was a great help as it supplemented their mothers' income and therefore they are able to manage financially.

Adam: My grandparents give some of the pension money for the house.

Ivan: If my grandma did not live with us it can be hard with money.

The adolescents' living conditions reflect the families' financial constraints. Adam and Ben live in low-cost housing which they share with their extended family. The rest of the participants live with their families in Wendy houses or corrugated iron shacks in backyards or in single rooms in shared accommodation with extended family or friends. The following three explanations reflect the different housing arrangements.

Jack: My boeta built a room for us in the back yard.

Glen: We live in a Wendy house behind my auntie's house.

Henk: We live in a room by my mummy's friend.

4.3.4 Having a father figure in the house

Having a father in the house is not the norm for boys growing up in their community. They are all in the same situation and knew of many other boys who, like them, shared these circumstances, as stated by Adam:

In this area most of the fathers are drunk or drugged ... some have left and others are in prison ... many of my friends at school are in the same situation as me.

However, not having a father in the house does not mean that no adult males performed this role. Five of the ten participants stated that they had uncles, their mother's boyfriend or older brothers to fulfil that role. Adam's uncle, Carl's mother's boyfriend and Don's older brother sometimes take on the role of father in their lives.

4.3.5 Family and Community Relationships

I enquired about the nature of the relationships between family members. In the data most of the participants described their households as violent environments. Sixty percent of the participants stated that they lived in such environments. This is what was said by two of the participants.

Glen: There's always fighting in our house...sometimes it really gets woes (out of hand).

Carl: Living with a drunk and abusive father is not *lekker* (nice).

This comment of Carl's is validated by his collage (see page 66, collage no.6). In Carl's depiction of his family he had a picture of a cannon which symbolised a war zone. His caption read: "just like in my family".

Although the circumstances that they sketched were far from happy and nurturing, the data showed that the majority focused on not having an open relationship with their mothers. Those living with a grandmother felt that the grandmother was more approachable. The following quotes depict the lack of communication with their mothers:

Henk: My mother stresses for the smallest thing. She never listens... she is always on my back... sometimes she is so *onnodig* ... (unnecessary).

Don: My mother is always cross. Whenever you ask her for anything where money is needed she tells you: '*gaan vra vir jou pa.*' [go ask your father]

Comments like this by the mother emphasises the fact that though the father is not present in their lives, there is constant reference to him by the mother, especially when she cannot provide for her son. The absent father is seen as continuing to exist within the family through the child .

As already stated, most of the participants live in poor socio-economic conditions. (This sentiment was also very prevalent in their collages). Most of them are

exposed to many negative influences such as substance abuse, violence and gangsterism. Ben described his neighbourhood as follows:

My area where I stay is very *rof* (rough), all is happening there now is the children who is in the 'Tik' enterprise.

The participants all expressed the desire to grow up in a better community and to escape the circumstances in which they find themselves at present. The data contain many references to their dissatisfaction with their social environment. According to Don, I would have liked it different because it is very hectic here, problems everywhere. Where I come there are problems and there are lots of violence.

4.4 EMOTIONS EXPRESSED ABOUT BEING FATHERLESS

These participants grew up in households where no father is present, even though their fathers are alive. In the data-collecting process, the participants used some terms and words constantly that to me were reflections of their emotions. The table below represents the words the participants used when talking about their absent fathers. It was observed that the participants used the same word to express their emotions. The words and phrases are the properties of the categories that I labeled expressions of emotions.

TABLE 4.3: EMOTIONS EXPRESSED ABOUT BEING FATHERLESS

Properties	Adam	Ben	Carl	Don	Eric	Fred	Glen	Henk	Ivan	Jack
Anger/Frustration Angry / red hot/ fire	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Lonely/Rejected Alone / On my own	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
Sad/Unhappy Unloved / No one cares	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Low self-esteem Can't / Cannot do		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Far away / Want to be on my own.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	

Some of the participants became very aggressive and emotional during the interviews when they spoke about their fathers' absence in their worlds. Three became very quiet at first and then slowly started to answer the questions. Four broke down and started crying. During my observation I became aware that they were experiencing discomfort and unhappiness about this specific situation. It appeared that this was a very sensitive issue to talk about. The participants expressed different emotions. The emotions of anger, loneliness and rejection, sadness, low self-esteem and depression were clearly observed in what they were saying when speaking about their fathers. These were expressed by the participants in the following manner:

Don: My father must not come near me. If I see him I just don't know what I can do to him. It's because of him that we are suffering like this.

Ben: *My pa is die rede waarom my ma altyd uitrafel. Ek sal hom lelik seermaak as ek hom sien.* [My father is the reason why my mother always loses her cool. I will hurt him very badly when I see him.]

Carl and Adam expressed frustration, sadness, unhappiness with their circumstances and felt helpless.

Adam: I don't know why my mother always tells me ... you are just like your father. I don't know my father. I have never seen him. I don't know what he is like. What is she trying to tell me when she says this?

Carl: What am I to do when my mother keeps on telling me ask you father?

During the semi-structured interviews three of the participants became very emotional and broke down. At the end of the interviews the participants were given the opportunity to sign up counselling sessions. These sessions were offered to the participants over a four week period. Who ever wanted to attend were welcome. During such incidents I stopped the interviewing and gave them time to compose themselves. They said that they were very unhappy and disappointed with their situation and felt guilty about not being able to assist their mothers. Glen mentioned that if he had a choice he would leave home, and said that he "...would leave right now. At one stage I felt so mad I was going to kill myself." Ben's home situation

became so unmanageable that he took an overdose of tablets and landed up in hospital. “I could not take it anymore.” When I probed further, he said the following:

Die gedurige geskel en skree van my moeder. En omdat sy altyd my blameer vir my pa se dinge. [The continuous arguments and shouting of my mother and because she blames me for the things my father had done.]

When asked where they saw themselves in a few years from now or what they wanted to become, they were very negative and could not see a future beyond the now. The following excerpt from Jack’s data is representative of many responses on the future:

I don’t know what I want to be. Why bother we already know where we will end up. *Ons gaan nommer trek.* [We are going to draw a number].

The last statement refers to the numbers gangs that operate in prisons.

4.5 PARTICIPANTS’ VIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE FATHER IN THE FAMILY

During the interviews as well as when they created the collages, I enquired about the participants’ views on the role of a father in the family. A strong sentiment across the majority of the group was that men need to be the head of the household, which amongst other things means they go out to work, that ‘real’ work involves working with one’s hands, that they do not do chores around the house, that having money and dressing well is part of the package. ‘Real men’ were referred to as being ‘cool’

‘fresh’, ‘daai ou’ and ‘the man’. The table below is a presentation of their responses. However, if one compares these responses with their real life situations one would find that these would be the ideal but is not their reality as none of them have fathers to play these roles.

TABLE 4.4: THE ROLES THAT FATHERS PLAY		
Provider	<p>The man should be the breadwinner.</p> <p>He must earn the money and bring it home.</p> <p>The father must provide the family with money to buy things.</p> <p>When he does his duty towards his wife and his family and his home he is a man.</p>	<p>(Ben/SI)</p> <p>(Fred/SI)</p> <p>Don</p>
Protector	<p>A father should be a ‘real man’ to look after his family.</p> <p>A person who is there for you, there when you need him, to speak to when you have problems, to come to school functions, to come sort things out, someone to be there for you When you want something you can at least ask him to buy you things.</p> <p>The father must be there for his family and keep them safe.</p>	<p>Glen/FG</p> <p>Ivan</p> <p>(Eric/SI).</p>
Guide	<p>A father should be there to show you what is right.</p> <p>A father must inform you about the bad things like drugs.</p> <p>The father is the man and he must show you how to be a man.</p> <p>My mother can’t teach me the things I need to be a man.</p>	<p>Don/SI)/</p> <p>(Carl/SI)</p> <p>Fred</p> <p>Eric</p>
Identity	<p>A father should teach you about man things.</p> <p>One need a man to make you think and be like a man.</p>	<p>(Ivan/CC)</p> <p>(Adam/SI)</p>

SI= Semi-structured interview; FG = Focus group discussion; CC = Construction of Collage.

Adam was the only participant who recognised the abilities of his mother despite the challenges he faced, when he said the following:

Men are always considered the head of the household while women are subordinate to men. Therefore a woman is not allowed to be equal to her husband when it comes to household decision-making. Why should this be when my mother is the sole provider in my home and we are managing very well. This negates the potential positive value his relationship with his mother holds for him in the absence of a father figure in his life.

4.6 EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY PARTICIPANTS

These participants function not just in the family but also in the wider community of school. Table 4.5 list the challenges they face within the school environment.

TABLE 4.5: EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY PARTICIPANTS										
Category	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Academic Issues	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Behavioural Issues			X	X	X	X	X		X	x
School Attendance			X	X		X	X	x	x	

Grades Repeated		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	x
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A=Adam, B=Ben, C=Carl, D=Don, E=Eric, F=Fred, G=Glen, H=Henk, I=Ivan, J=Jack

As the table above shows, the majority of the participants indicated that they were struggling with some or other learning problem and behaviour which placed them at risk. Reading was said to be one of the major problems for Adam. "When the teacher asks me to read I always make an excuse, he does not ask me any more." Because of the academic challenges some said that they were always in trouble and that their work was never done. Coming late for school and misbehaving meant that they ended up in detention on a regular basis. Jack was being suspended at regular intervals.

Behaviour problems were also very common amongst the participants. Ivan and Jack indicated that they have behaved badly at school which led to suspension and disciplinary hearings. Their behaviour is very often directed towards teachers and other figures of authority. Ivan relayed an incident where he beat up a teacher because he became tired of the teacher continuously blaming him. Jack disrupts the class and has received numerous warnings because of it.

Absenteeism seems to be a major problem for most of the participants. Their attendance is very irregular and they seem to be late for school very often. From their responses it would seem that they are disinterested in school.

Jack: I was late for school 34 times last term.

Henk: School is such a waste of time. I would rather go and work and help my mother. What is there for me to become anyway.

Don: I hate school. I only go to school to please my mother.

Two of the participants repeated two grades, six repeated once and one participant did not repeat at all.

Henk: I failed grade 7 and grade 9.

Carl: I failed two times already.

4.7 MANIFESTATIONS OF AT- RISKNESS

The table below represents the data that were categorised as contributing to at-risk behaviour in these male adolescents. The right-hand column provides examples of the data that were coded, for example Carl's reference that in gangs they are "friends together like family" (Carl, CC) and Adam's comment that the gang as a "group makes me feel good" (Adam, CC). Six of the ten participants indicated that they belonged to a gang. Of the ten individuals, six indicated that they have had experience of taking drugs. The reasons given were amongst others that it is part of

socialisation (“Take drugs and hang around” (Fred, CC) or an escape mechanism (“Do drugs to forget about things” (Ivan, CC).

TABLE 4.6: AT-RISK BEHAVIOUR

Category	Examples of the data
Gangs	Friends together like family (Carl/CC) / Group makes me feel good accepted (Adam/CC)
Drugs	Do drugs to forget about things (Ivan/CC) / Take drugs hang around (Fred/CC)
Violence	Like to hurt people (Adam/CC) / Feel I want to hurt them (Ivan/CC)
Crime	Was already two times in court (Henk/FG) / Completed NICRO, YES programme (Eric/FG)
Peer Pressure	They are like family (Adam/CC) / My friends they cool (Carl/CC)

Peer pressure was identified as influential on their lives. Most of the participants have many friends and their experiences of social life centre around hanging around on street corners and in shops and going to the shebeen to play games. These are the main leisure activities in a community where there are not many activities in which they can participate. Some of the participants indicated that they are very irresponsible while they are at school due to being pressured by their friends. Two of the participants reported the following:

Henk: Sometimes when at school I commit many irresponsible things, but many times I am told to do so by friends.

Ivan: Very often when we do things we do it *saam* (together).

From the participants, Adam and Fred appeared not to be as influenced by peers as the rest. They are able to make their own decisions and decide on what they want. According to Adam, he is a quiet, introverted and friendly person, except when he is challenged. Fred describes himself as follows: "I am good at talking with others, of a friendly nature and mingle quickly with other people."

The community from which they come is infamous for gang activity. As such I asked them about gang influences. On my question on why boys get involved in gangs I had mixed responses. Being a member of a gang was common for the participants as most of them stated that they joined gangs for economic reasons, because of being bullied, peer pressure and low self-esteem. The gang also provides them with a home where they feel accepted and appreciated. Some experience a feeling of safety when they are with the gang and also that it gives them a sense of identity. Two participants appeared to be opposed to gangs. Don and Adam were against gangs as they felt that your whole life is influenced by it. Adam described it as a life sentence, as "..... you like in it for life". The following reasons were given why they as youth become gang members:

Henk: Like some people who know you live with your mother and you *kry swaar* (have a hard time). Now this guy comes to you and he says, I will give you everything that you want but that you have to come with me, you have to do what I say plus you have to join our gang. Now you have no choice but to go.

Ivan: Maybe some of them get.... gets bullied by the school by the bigger children say now they are small then they build up all that ... then maybe I see that gang is cool, there then, now they maybe join the gang, now the gang tells them that they have to do something, then they do the stuff and then later they want to leave then it is already too late.

Jack: *Die hoofrede waarom seuns by bende betrokke raak is omdat hulle will cool wees.* [The main reason why boys join gangs is because they want to be cool.]

Carl: Most of the time why children join gangs is because their mom doesn't work, maybe their father is not with them and does not give enough money, so they can't have everything they want or what the other children have.... Maybe he want a pair of takkies the ones that all the grand people have, they want to wear grand clothes now why should he suffer.

Other explanations given as reasons why some of their peers joined gangs are consistent with the findings of Luyt and Foster (2001), namely the need to be recognized, feared and respected. While it is seen as an unavoidable feature of life, three of the participants distanced themselves from such activity and were outspoken about the negative outcomes of such involvement.

Substance abuse was also a common feature of the young men's lives, although they generated contradictory sentiments. For the most it was acceptable and even 'cool' for boys to be smoking and drinking; however, they were also aware of the risk

of the abuse of such substances, which they saw happening largely as a result of peer pressure, family example and boredom. Half of the subjects stated that they abused alcohol and drugs regularly.

Carl: Yes alcohol is a problem and if you are under the influence, you can easily engage in sexual acts, which will lead to impregnating girls. This happens all the time.

Glen: Drugs is cool it puts you in a *plak* (gives you courage) to protect yourself

The participants are trying to say that one needs drugs because once you have taken it you have the courage to perform violent and inhumane acts of which you do not remember anything as stated by Jack:

You just do you don't think about it it's like a protection when your mind is clear you feel like you don't remember anything.

This sentiment was echoed by most of the participants.

Violence appeared to be very common in the lives of these boys. Six of the participants mentioned that they solved problems and conflict with violence. One of them stated that he felt no emotion when hurting someone. Violence also appeared to be a problem at school. According to Fred, ".You learns to take what you want by force if you don't have school things." Related violence was described as a result of economic need, peer pressure, even boredom. Jack described a typical incident:

Sometimes we go ballistic just for fun because we are bored ... *of*
we intimidate people to force them to give us their *goetes*
(valuables) ... sell for drugs.

More than half of the participants have been arrested for some criminal activity. As a result, Carl has been on the YES programme at the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO). According to Carl, “r... if I mess up now I will be expelled from school.” Ben had appeared in court twice, while Jack has a suspended sentence.

4.8 DATA DEVELOPING AS EMPOWERING

During the focus group discussion the boys related well to each other but in a very superficial way. It appeared as if they were acting in a self-promoting way. The collage as a data-collection method was experienced by the participants as well as by me as most enjoyable because of the more relaxed atmosphere. The construction of the collage took place in the first part of the morning. Some of the participants appeared to be drugged and there was a stuffy sweet smell of dagga on their person. They came across as more relaxed, enjoyed the activity and shared their thoughts freely during the making of the collage. Despite this, trust issues were still to be taken into consideration as at some stage one of the participants managed to remove my camera from my bag without me noticing.

I asked the participants to make a collage depicting their families and the challenges they faced on a daily basis. I provided all the materials for the activity. Only nine of the ten participants arrived for the session. They got started as soon as I finished my explanation of what I expected them to do. They worked very industriously and chatted and shared what they intended to do with each other. The participants were relaxed and they enjoyed the activity.

Thereafter each participant was asked to present his collage to the group. During the presentations they were all very quiet and listened to the person presenting. Figures 4.1 to 4.9 are examples of the participants' collages. Underneath I include an excerpt of each person's presentation, though the data collected are included in the tables that have been presented earlier.



Figure 4.1 Collage I: Adam

I am feels alone and wants to disappear into the big anonymous city. I have never experienced a father figure in my life but in a mother headed household I have overcome many challenges. I do have supportive caregivers in my mother and

grandparents and don't really see a need for a father. Keeping bad company got me involved with drugs but I want to put this behind me and to get rid of the shadows of the past.



Figure 4.2 Collage 2: Don

I am part of a messed up and aggressive family. I wonder how I survive having to take over the role of a father around the house. For recreation I go out on to the street as there is nothing in my poor house. School is difficult for me and I would rather study from home. I wish that my parents would come together and we could do things together like going on holiday like other families.



Figure 4.3 Collage 3: Fred

I imagine a loving family but there is no father figure in my life. The half built stadium I see as a half completed family and the incomplete half needs to be filled with love. My family is dysfunctional and searching for the happy road to home is not easy. To escape this I have been involved with drugs and bad company which I try to hide from my mother by bending the truth.



Figure 4.4 Collage 4: Glen

My family is like this picture, shouting and aggressive behaviour. This makes me unhappy. I need to take a giant leap away from this environment. With my mother not working and father not supporting there is never enough food or provisions to go around. For my family to come together and celebrate as a team would be my ideal.



Figure 4.5 Collage 5: Ivan

My vision in life is to be responsible and caring towards my mother and grandmother. I want a good education but find this difficult in the dysfunctional home. I find identity and acceptance amongst peers (join gang). I would like to find a coach (father figure) to guide me. There are many fights and tough times in the home.



Figure 4.6 Collage 6: Carl

I feel that I am tortured every day in my home and cannot see the situation changing. I am unable to express how I feel. My mother is ignorant of how I feel. The canon in the collage expresses the violence and aggression in the family (WAR). I see the lion as being my mother wanting to be verbally abusive and aggressive. I see the spark plug as the stimulus which I feel my family needs.

food or for transport to school. My mother wastes the money she gets on herself and her boyfriend but not the family.



Figure 4.9 Collage 9: Erik

I imagine my abusive and aggressive absent father as described by my mother. I have never had a father to guide me against taking drugs. There is no male role model to help me with what I would like to accomplish. My mother works but finds it difficult to keep the family together. The quality of my home life is limited by the absence of money.

4.9 EXPERIENCING THE COLLAGE

The participants commented that they enjoyed making the collages which again opened wounds, but this time it made them happy and sad; happy in that they could get these things off their chest in a fun and relaxed manner and sad in having to think about it. Listening to the stories of the other participants made them feel

relieved because they felt that they were not alone in their struggles. This is what some of the participants had to say:

Adam: I feel good, got a lot off my chest. I needed to speak about it. It gives me a nice feeling. I can't speak to my mother about these things.

Ben: I feel like a heavy jacket is taken off my shoulders. To speak to is nice as I am happy to share in this way. It helped me.

Carl: I feel good. I enjoyed this session.

Don: Made me happy.

Eric: I feel sad in a happy way. Sad at the stuff my father does but happy with the hard way my mother tries to keep us together.

Ivan: Got stuff off my chest. Nice feeling. Enjoyed the activity.

Fred: I enjoyed it. At first I did not want to explore myself. Did not want to go there, makes me emotional/sad. I don't want to take me down; I want to build me up.

Glen: I have a *lekker* (nice) feeling now. I just wish it can stay all the time.

Henk: I feel good about it ... I could see things that were wrong. Nice that I think about and talk about.

From the above it is obvious that all the participants experienced this process as an empowering one.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the findings of the data collected during the research on the experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father figure. The data were reduced to themes and categories in a process of data sorting and analysis. The themes and categories answered the research questions I posed at the start of the research. The themes and categories which appeared during the analysis and interpretation dealt with diverse experiences of family, feelings/emotions expressed by participants, the role of the father as perceived by the participants, educational challenges and at-risk behaviour and challenges faced by the participants. In the following chapter I will discuss the research in relation to the literature and previous research. Some limitations in the research will be identified and recommendations for further research will be made.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will present and discuss the findings of the study and I will use the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as a framework for this discussion. The research findings are summarised and discussed according to the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The process entailed an exploration and interpretation of the common themes that emerged from the data that were produced in the semi-structured interviews, the focus group discussions and the collages. These themes are discussed according to the categories that were created during the data analysis. The following categories were created and will guide the discussion:

- Family dynamics
- The role of a father in the family
- Educational challenges faced by participants
- Manifestation of at-risk behaviour

5.2 THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.2.1 Family dynamics

This theme represents the adolescents' experiences of family dynamics in households without a father figure. The findings indicated that the participants were a diverse group of individuals who were part of diverse family structures. A number of interrelated factors seemed to have predisposed them to at-risk behaviour and challenges. These factors included their female-headed households and their overcrowded living conditions. According to Prince (2009), 40% of South Africa's 18 million children are being raised by single mothers. Single mothers are faced with more difficulties than their married counterparts (Whitehead & Holland, 2003). As reported by Sadie and Loots (1998:1), 'Women have a larger share of poverty in South Africa than men.' The incidence of single-mother families is increasing globally, as the literature shows (Wright, 1994; Vaden-Kierman, 1995; Popenoe, 1996; Franz, Lensche & Schmitz, 2003; Olson, Ceballo & Park, 2002; Whitehead & Holland, 2003). Eight participants indicated that they lived in very poor conditions and that this was mainly due to financial constraints. Three of the participants stated that their mothers worked on a casual basis, but that there was not enough money to cover all their expenses. These financial constraints are directly linked to the challenges these participants face in their daily activities and development.

All the participants seemed to have poor communication with their parent, and lacked parental supervision. Their families were described as lacking in discipline, and violence seems to be part of these households. Regarding family rules and discipline and its effect on adolescents, McAnarney and Hendee (quoted in Trad, 1999:225) indicate that adolescents whose family lacks structure may be at a heightened risk of at-risk behaviour very early in their lives. Single mothers have the added roles of being father, the sole breadwinner as well as the sole provider of family security and resources. In addition to the mother as the main provider and protector, grandmothers also serve as surrogates in this role. Of the ten participants, five said that there was no male role model in their world. The other five participants named an uncle, older brother or their mother's boyfriend as their male role model.

The relationships these participants have with these men are of a positive and negative nature. For two of the ten participants these relations were positive in that the uncle and older brother provided them with guidance and information needed for male identity formation. For three of the ten participants the relationship was negative in that the uncle and older brother abused drugs and the mother's boyfriend was abusive. According to McLanahan (2000), the presence of a warm and affectionate male role model or father figure can help boys to develop positive self-esteem and can influence gender role behavior. Negative male role models can cause further family disruptions and adolescent boys in such situations can easily become involved in gangs because of their need for a positive male role model and a sense of identity (Field;2001).

Positive and reinforcing family communication is crucial for healthy family functioning. This is where the influence of a positive male role model could play an instrumental role. The literature highlights the difficulties single mothers experience in raising sons.

Some analysts argue that growing up in a single-mother household is the primary cause of most serious social problems, including poverty, high school dropout rate and at-risk behaviour (Popenoe, 1996; Whitehead, 1993; Blankenhorn, 1995). Others argue that poverty and economic insecurity may cause father absence and adolescent behavioural problems (Skolnick, 1991; Stacy, 1993). This exposes the family to major stressors, which in turn make the mother vulnerable to psychological distress and lower self-esteem levels which could have a negative effect on the development of her adolescent son.

In this study, according to the participants, mothers find coming home at night to take on all the other parenting tasks very daunting. Due to these challenges they are not able to provide their adolescent sons with the care, discipline, support and family rules needed during this very crucial stage of their lives. Very often such boys will move outside of the family home to find a group that will 'accept' their shortcomings and provide a sense of belonging. As adolescents build social relationships with their peers they become more detached from their family. To some extent the peer group takes the place of the family. Increasingly the adolescent boys become interested

and involved in the peer group that comes to play an important role in their social development (Enfield, 2003:15). The participants in this study have many friends. To one of them friends are like family. To others the friends are the people they can trust to do things with and just be 'cool'. Seven of the participants rely on their friends for support and socialising.

The literature supports the findings of this study. Family structures are important for acquiring an understanding of the context in which adolescent at-risk behaviour may occur. Families are interdependent in that each member of the system influences and is influenced by the other members. The implication of this is that if family structures are not stable it could lead to high-risk behaviour. The role of the family during adolescence is to help the adolescent to establish a positive sense of identity and accept increased responsibility (Sattler & Hodge, 2003:9).

5.2.2 The role of a father in the family

Talk about fathers and fatherhood generated very emotional responses in all of the participants. These emotions included anger, frustration, loneliness, rejection, sadness, low self-esteem and depression. Denny and Martin (2004) support the contention that early experiences of father absence do affect the child's self-description, which in turn contributes to the types of self-attributions that are developed in adolescence.

Seven of the participants described the overcrowded conditions at home and the lack of privacy and space as a problem for them. The overcrowded circumstances often lead to arguments and conflict among household members. In many cases the participants seek peace and comfort on the streets or in a gang. All these conditions engendered low self-esteem which could emanate from feelings of a sense of 'loss'. This could be a result of the socio-economic situation in the home due to an absent father, a bad relationship with their mother and the inability to be productive. Some literature reports that the loss of a parent reduces a child's self-esteem and increases the incidence of depression, anxiety, behavioural disturbances, academic problems, somatic complaints and suicidal acts (Griesel-Roux, Ebersohn, Smit & Elloff, 2005: 253).

Daniels (1998:39) argues that fathers are important as they bring a range of unique qualities to parenting roles, such as protector, disciplinarian and role model. The participants do not view their fatherless families as incomplete. However, none of them have good relationships with their mothers and they all seem to not communicate well with them. Most of the participants said that they would not go to their mother should they have a problem about male issues. They do not find their mothers to be the individuals that they talk to about male issues. This seems to suggest a need for a male figure that they can communicate with on such issues, in the absence of their fathers. Chen (2007) states that boys can learn from their

fathers about growing up as a male. Fathers are also exposed to male interests, activities and social behaviour and can therefore guide the adolescent towards a positive male identity. These adolescents find their grandparents to be approachable and described them as playing a positive role in their lives.

Though none of these adolescents know a father, they have definite ideas as to what roles fathers should play. One is as head of the household. According to them, fathers need to be the head of the household, which amongst other things means that they go out to work, that 'real' work involved working with one's hands, that they do not do chores around the house. The participants stated that fathers should have money and dress well as this is part of the package as a real man. 'Real men' were referred to as being 'cool', 'fresh' '*daai ou*' and 'the man'. The participants believe that men are the breadwinners and that they should be responsible. This behaviour has already been identified by Epprecht (1998), Pyke, (1996) and Hammond and Mattis (2005). The participants say the role of a husband is to protect and look after women and to be responsible for the women in their lives. These views seem to reflect a very chauvinistic view of fatherhood, and could be the result of their limited exposure to real fathers in their lives.

5.2.3 Educational challenges faced by participants

Eight participants said they were struggling with learning and behavioural problems at school which placed them at risk. The challenges they face are issues such as their school work not being done on time; arriving late for school; absenteeism and misbehaving. They are suspended frequently and some struggle with literacy. Seven participants indicated that they have behaved badly at school, have been suspended or hauled before disciplinary hearings. According to them, their behaviour is very often directed towards teachers and other figures of authority. Most of the participants had to repeat grades at some stage of their schooling. Three participants repeated two grades and five indicated that they repeated a grade once. Most of the participants see these educational challenges as a hindrance that prevents them from getting on with their lives. Three participants indicated that they would rather stay at home than go to school. To them school is a waste of time. Another participant mentioned that he would rather leave school and help his mother to provide for the family.

These findings are supported by the literature. Researchers have examined the behavioural consequences of boys growing up without a father. There seems to be commonalities in their findings. School dropouts, crime, violence and involvement with gangs are problems. Dobson (2002) states that boys suffering from the absence or non-involvement of fathers are twice as likely to drop out of school, twice as likely to go to jail and four times as likely to need treatment for emotional and behavioural

problems as boys with fathers. Biddulph (2004) echoes Dobson's findings that boys with absent fathers are statistically more likely to be violent, get hurt and get in trouble, do poorly at school and be members of a gang. Being a member of a gang is common for the participants. Other explanations given as reasons why some of their peers joined gangs are consistent with Luyt and Foster's (2001) findings, namely the need to be recognised, feared and respected.

5.2.4 Manifestations of at-risk behaviour.

Morrell (2001) states that the youth from disadvantaged communities' generally live dangerous lives on the edge of crime. Their lives are characterised by few life opportunities and a randomness that often finds expression in anti-social activity, drugs, abuse and heavy emphasis on heterosexual expression of masculinity.

It is evident that being a young man is associated with a wide range of risky situations and behaviour. Central to many of the participants' talk was the fact and possibility of violence, which played itself out in somewhat different forms. For boys growing up on the Cape Flats gangsterism is a defining feature of their social context (Kinnes, 1995; Luyt & Foster, 2001; Morrell, 2002; Salo, 2003). The participants gave graphic accounts of gang-related violence and described it as the result of economic need, peer pressure, boredom and as an escape from a nagging mother, bullying and low self-esteem and to be given a male identity which they did not get at home. While it is seen as an unavoidable feature of life for these young men, in the

focus group discussion three of the participants distanced themselves from gangsters and were outspoken about the negative consequences of such involvement. These three were the ones with the most protective factors in the form of a supportive mother, grandmother or male role model in their lives.

The findings show that all the participants' community contexts could be contributing to their at-riskness. They are constantly exposed to substance abuse and violence, even in their homes. There are many shebeens in their vicinity and they have easy access to alcohol and drugs. Some of the participants have family members or know members of the community who freely and frequently abuse these substances. The participants in this study stated that they were using alcohol, though none seemed to be informed about the dangers of alcohol abuse. For them visiting shebeens and becoming totally intoxicated is a normal activity and their only form of recreation. Substance abuse is common amongst five of the participants. For them it is acceptable and even 'cool' to smoke dagga and to drink alcohol, even though they are aware of the consequences of such behaviour. In the 2007 WCED study drug-related issues as reason for expulsion was as high as 65%.

Six of the participants said they solved problems and conflict with violence. For these young men violence is also a common feature of everyday life. They see violence as an acceptable method of demonstrating power or as a way of taking revenge, or to prove one's bravery. To others, violence is associated with being

'cool'. Here they tended to link their views with examples from the media of fighting and toughness, despite also being strongly critical of any form of domestic violence.

These findings link with that of Biddulph (2004:7) who describes the lives of boys he studied as "*quiet desperation*". So too Bemak and Keys (2000) found that such boys have a very limited array of responses when feeling angry, provoked or dissatisfied. Pollack (1998) refers to this so-called 'Boy's Code' of toughness as a society-condoned gender straightjacket for boys, which leads them to externalising responses in the form of violent behaviour.

Messages regarding aggressive behaviour are sent to boys via the actions of male role models. Actions entail abuse of the youth or the youth witnessing abuse of another family member, such as the mother or a sibling. The permission given to boys to use violence comes from destructive belief systems that are reinforced at home in particular and in society in general. Duhon-Sells (1995) reports that in their socialisation these boys are exposed far too frequently to the view that aggressiveness, violence and force are acceptable means of expression and can contribute to sustainable solutions for conflict.

More than 50% of the participants have been arrested for some criminal activity. Brendtro, Brokenleg & Bockern (1990:86) warn that when hurting (aggressive) behaviour is exalted and rationalised and helping behaviour is ridiculed, then there is potent brainwashing at work. When observing crime statistics in a society in South

Africa it is alarming to notice how many references there are to young men and boys. In the 2007 WCED study criminal activity contributed to 53% of the referrals for expulsion. It is however important to remember that adolescents who are exposed to absent father households may manifest different behavioural problems and that not all of them may end up as gangsters or criminals.

5.3 LIMITATIONS

I experienced certain factors as limitations to the study. As the researcher I needed to be sensitive to how I influenced the outcome of the study. Even though I was always aware of controlling it, my very different childhood family background could have contributed to bias on my part during the data-collecting stage as well as when I interpreted the findings. I addressed this through validating the data across the research methods, and through key informants.

The research was conducted with ten adolescents from the same community and with similar social backgrounds and influences. Though qualitative research is about understanding, and not generalising, the findings cannot be generalised beyond this community. The awareness of participating in a research project could have influenced the responses from the participants. This is called the Hawthorne effect, which Huyseman (1994:66) suggests is a “reactivity of research referring to the impact on individual participants of knowing that they are part of research”.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- The study was delimited to a sample population of adolescent boys from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst the findings may find applicability in similar communities, a broader perspective on adolescent boys growing up without a father could be obtained by also duplicating this research with a population of boys from middle class and affluent families.
- The study only focused on the adolescent boys' experiences. Further research is needed on single-parent households and how mothers compensate for the absence of fathers in the lives of their sons.
- Extensive research with adolescent boys could be undertaken to find out how boys deal with discipline in female-headed households.
- The scope of this study did not allow to go into detail about how the school context contributes to the situation of these adolescent boys. There is need for a more comprehensive research study in which these issues can be addressed.
- It was not within the scope of this research to study the family unit, specifically the role of male siblings. Further research could be conducted on the role that older brothers play in the lives of their adolescent brothers.
- The role of the gang in compensating for an absent father also requires further research.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The study's findings show the many challenges that poor adolescent boys face in their development when they grow up without a male role model. The following recommendations could be implemented by strategic role players to prevent these adolescent boys from becoming resistant to the challenges they face on a daily basis in growing up without a father figure.

Schools have an important role to play in influencing the decisions that their adolescent learners make in life. Life skills programmes and life orientation lessons could address some of the challenges such adolescent males face. It is recommended that programmes be developed that assist learners in their decisions about substance abuse. Adolescent boys who grow up without positive male role models to relate to, make decisions without guidance. As such they are at risk of making the wrong decisions. Their energy could be directed in constructive ways through participation in recreational activities and extra-mural activities at school. Resilience skills could be taught so that they can cope and have something to fall back on in future. Psychological support services should be available to assist with aggressive feelings that could lead to destructive behaviour. There should be assistance to boys such as the ten participants to help them identify and express their emotions in safe spaces where they can talk without being judged.

School counsellors and social workers should be trained to work with school problems and learner problems holistically. This could help them identify problems earlier, or even prevent such problems from occurring. The ten adolescents need role models who can encourage them and boost their confidence. In the absence of strong male role models, mentoring training could be provided by male educators and other male volunteers. Communities should also encourage males to act as role models in the lives of such adolescent boys.

Finally, the adolescents' relationships with their mothers require attention. There is a need for parenting skills and support programmes for single mothers to assist them in the managing of their adolescent sons. Their sons also need training in relationship building as they appear to lack the skills needed to build healthy relationships.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the analysed data were interpreted and discussed. I discussed the themes and made recommendations and suggestions. Possible areas for further research were suggested and limitations of the inquiry were also discussed.

They are growing up in female-headed households with mothers who are struggling to support their families. Some of their mothers have abdicated their duties to grandmothers who have taken on the role of surrogate mothers. Their relationships with their mothers are troubled and respect for this parent appears to be lacking. They come from a poor socio-economic background and almost all are living in extended families. The lack of privacy in such households contributes to communication problems as the living conditions are not conducive to family closeness. These participants share resources with their extended families and often compete for basic resources. These ten adolescents seem to struggle with discipline issues at school as well as at home. They are at a vulnerable age, and at risk of making decisions that would be devastating to their futures. Growing up in a community where risk factors such as substance abuse and gangsterism is rife contributes to their at-riskness. The findings of the research revealed that adolescent boys who grow up without fathers create their own male role models. In the absence of such role models they can find security, identity and even a 'father figure' in less positive individuals.

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APPENDIX A

Navrae
Enquiries Dr RS Cornelissen
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone (021) 467-2286
IFoni

Faks
Fax (021) 425-7445
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference 20080627-0068
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mr Frederick Sylvester
57 Kenilworth Road
KENILWORTH
7708

Dear Mr F. Sylvester

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: ABSENT FATHERS AT RISK YOUTH.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **21st July 2008 to 21st September 2008**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following school: **Cloeteville Secondary**.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 30th June 2008

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNUMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALE INOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

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APPENDIX B



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

23 April 2009

Tel.: 021 - 808-2687
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 168/2009

Mr F.J.Toni Sylvester
Department Educational Psychology
Stellenbosch University
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Dear mr F.J.Toni Sylvester

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *At-risk youth - the experience of adolescent boys growing up without a father*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards




MS. M. HUNTER-HÜSSELMANN
Co-ordinator: Research (Human and Social Sciences)

Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division of Research Development

Privaat Sak/Private Bag X1 • 7602 Stellenbosch • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel +27 21 808 9111 • Faks/Fax: +27 21 808 4537



APPENDIX C

Consent Form for Participant

Dear Participant

Request for consent to participate in Research Project.

I am Toni Sylvester a master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University.

I am conducting research on the challenges faced by boys who grow up without fathers, and would value your participation as you would be an asset to this study.

If you consent, I would require you to be available for an interview. Everything you tell me will be held in the strictest confidence and your privacy will not be abused. If you so prefer, you could be given a pseudonym in place of your own/real name.

Participation in the research is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time with no Consequences to you.

If you agree to participate, I ask that you sign this form.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.

*I Consent to participate voluntarily in the
above research project.*

Signed..... Date.....

APPENDIX D

Consent form for Parent / Guardian

Dear Parent / Guardian

Request for consent for your son to participate in Research Project.

I am Toni Sylvester a master's student in the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University.

I am conducting research on the challenges faced by boys who grow up without fathers, and would value your son's participation as he would be an asset to this study.

If you consent, I would require your son to be available for an interview. Everything he tells me will be held in the strictest confidence and his privacy will not be abused. If you so prefer, he could be given a pseudonym in place of his own/real name.

Participation in the research is voluntary. He may withdraw at any time with no consequences to him.

If you agree that your son/ participate, I ask that you sign this form.

I understand that my son's / participation is voluntary and that he may withdraw at any time.

Iconsent for my son /
..... to participate voluntarily in the above research project.

Signed..... Date.....

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

At-risk youth – the experiences of adolescent boys growing up without a father.

Background Information

I want to start by asking a few questions about your family, if that is ok with you.

1. Family History

- Where does your family come from?
 - Family size
 - How large is your family?
- Parent figures
 - Who are the parental figures in the family?
- Siblings
 - How many siblings do you have?
 - Who are they and what are their ages?
- Head of household
 - Who is the head of the household in your family?

Male figures in immediate family.

Educational Background

Next I want to focus on information about your schooling.

2. Educational History

Tell me where you went to school; let us start with primary school and then move on to high school.

- Number of schools attended.
- Number of years at school
- Present grade
- Grades repeated
- Problems at school if any
- Achievements if any

Male figures in your family

Tell me about the male figures in your household.

3. Male figures in your household

- Who are they (Grandfather, uncle, Mother's partner, etc.)?
- What was/is your relationship with (Grandfather, uncle etc.)?
- Was/is he the person you would go to when you need help with male issues?
- Was/is this the person you would ask to accompany you when a male person needs to represent you at school/sports/youth club/disciplinary hearing.?

D Father

I am now going to ask you some questions about your father.

4. Your father is not living with the family. Is that correct?

- Have you ever had a father?
- Has he always been absent?
- Did you ever ask about your fathers absence?
- What do you know about your father? (want to know status of father etc)
- What is your relationship with your father (If there is a father)
- Do you get to see /talk / visit / do things with your father?

Does your father have another family? (How do you feel about this)?

E Home

5. I would like to ask you some questions about your home.

- Do you find yourself taking on the father/male role in your home?
- What is a father's role, according to you, in a home?
- What are fathers supposed to be like?
- List things fathers are supposed to do in a family/home.
- Who does most of the above mentioned in your home?
- How does not having a father in the home influence your interaction with your brothers and sisters?
- Is your mother/grandmother/aunt capable of teaching you about male issues? Capable of hearing about your male issues?

F Challenges

6 Next I want you to talk about the challenges growing up without a father.

- How does it make you feel to not have a father / grow up without a father?
- In the absence of a father / male figure who do you turn to as a male role model?
- Why do you consider this person as a male role model?
- How does it make you feel when your peers talk about their fathers?
- How does it make you feel when you arrive at school functions without a father?
- What kind of feelings do you get when you think about your father?
- Not having a father, does it have any effect on your interaction with your peers/teachers / behaviour towards male teachers / behaviour towards your mother?
- Not having a father, would you say that it has influenced your school work / behaviour at school / staying out of trouble / at home / towards peers / relationships?
- Without a father figure to provide advice or support, do you feel drawn to gang culture where you can be given support?
 - i. If you do not get advice and support from a father, who do you get it from?
 - ii. Do you feel drawn to any gang or society where you can be given support?
- If you should meet your father one day what would you say to him?
- Would you like to be a father? Expand when answered.

G Recommendations from boys

H Other themes

APPENDIX F

Example of transcript

1. R: I am going to ask you a few questions. I want you to answer them to the best of your ability
2. The first set of questions is going to be about your family.
3. R: Where does your family come from?
4. P: They come from the same area where I live ...here in Cloeteville.
5. R: How many people are in your family and who are they?
6. P: We are four people,...my marre, two sisters and me.
7. R: Who is the head of the family the person who gives guidance and disciplines you?
8. P: My marre runs the house ...she also is very stick with us...sometimes she hit us.
9. R: Are there any men or male persons with whom you have contact?
10. P: Yes my grenndpa but he does'nt stay by us.
11. R: Tell me about your school. How long have you been at this school?
12. P: Three years
13. R: Have you repeated any grades?

14. P: Yes sir, I should have been in grade 11 now...but was 2 years in grade 7 and grade 9.

15. R: What were the reasons for having repeated those grades?

16. P: I was finding the work difficult...I also stay absent a lot so I miss the work.

17. R: Did you have any other problems at school?

18. P: I sometimes was rude to the teachers, fight with the children and was suspended.

19. R: What was the reason for your suspension?

20. P: They caught us smoking dagga at school ...they wanted to expel me but they did dent.

APPENDIX G

List of Codes

R Researcher

P Participants

SI Semi-structured interviews

FG Focus group discussion

CC Collage

M Male

F Female

MT Mother

GM Grandmother

GF Grandfather

MA Mother's aunt

U Uncle

OB Older brother

MB Mothers boyfriend

E Employed

O	Does odd jobs
U	Unemployed
LA	Low average
P	Poor
M	Manage
I	Not managing
NN	Non
RD	Reading
AT	Attendance
BP	Behaviour problems
GR	Grade repeated
AG	Aggression
V	Violence
DE	Depression
LE	Low esteem
FS	Frustrated
AN	Angry

HT Hate

UH Unhappy

GT Guilty

HL Helpless

..... Pause/Uhm

DS Drugs

BL Bouts with the law

A Adam

B Ben

C Carl

D Don

E Eric

F Fred

G Glen

H Henk

I Ivan

J Jack

APPENDIX H

Colour Coding

Part of Quotations	Theme
<p>I feel angry (Adam/FG,CC)</p> <p>Anger built up (Fred/CC)</p> <p>Red hot like fire(Henk/CC)</p>	<p>ANGER</p>
<p>I am alone in the world(Adam/FG/CC)</p> <p>Very lonely(Ben/CC)</p> <p>He rejected me(Eric/CC)</p>	<p>LONELINESS</p>
<p>I am very unhappy(Henk/CC)</p> <p>Feel unloved out(Glen)</p> <p>I felt sad(Eric/SI/CC)</p>	<p>SADNESS</p>
<p>I want to become something but don't think I can (Eric/FG,CC)</p> <p>I can't (Ben/CC)</p>	<p>LOW SELF-ESTEEM</p>

I want to be on my own far away(Adam/CC)	DEPRESSION
How long will it still last this is all I think about	
day and night(Ivan/CC)	